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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE" IN THE FICTION OF WYNDHAM LEWIS

by

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE" IN THE FICTION OF WYNDHAM LEWIS submitted by Paula Grace Anderson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

In Chapter I, I examine Lewis's use of imagery, especially his use of images of violence, as well as his investigations of human psycho-sexuality. These investigations are seen as encompassing views of sex as a form of violence, as tragicomedy, or as an apparently ironic joke played by the gods, particularly at the expense of women.

In Chapter II, I see the family as providing the mirror and the milieu in which is enacted the drama of class, of psychic and emotional suicide externalized as class mobility, and finally, the tragedy of actual suicide. In the novel on which this chapter is based, the dominant metaphor is, not surprisingly, the image of the mask as counterfeit reality.

Chapter III deals with the complex issue of homosexuality, homo-eroticism, and latent homosexuality, on the one hand, and, on the other, what has been called, by recent feminist sociologists, homosociality. (These distinctions are footnoted in detail.) In short, this chapter deals with depictions of men whose major psychic, intellectual, emotional and social needs are filled by other men, rather than by women. Interestingly, then, the rape of a woman becomes a key incident in the development of the action of the novel Tarr.

In Chapter IV, I attempt to discuss the reality of female chauvinism, and the interaction of men, women, money and power -- issues which are only now receiving detailed attention in feminist groups.

Chapter V presents an examination of Lewis's exploration of the social, political, psycho-sexual, and psychological implications of love and growth for an individual who just happens to be female. This is a climactic chapter, which attempts to pull together major themes of Lewis's writing, as does the novel The Revenge for Love.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, two of my main emphases in interpretation and theory have to do with two factors which I consider crucial in Lewis's work -- namely the forces of satire, humour and laughter, and the power of the image. These two formal constructs are the basic methods by which Lewis reveals his content, and controls and directs his explorations. I feel that all of Lewis's writing which I discuss must be seen in the light of this claim.

In the classic essay "The Meaning of the Wild Body," contained in the collection entitled The Wild Body, Lewis himself examines, in metaphorical detail, the powerful complex of psychological stimuli and responses that laughter represents. But Lewisian laughter is even more complex -- and is always part of the dynamic method by which Lewis explodes our absolute pre-suppositions, and raises the level of our psychic and intellectual consciousness, so to speak. Lewis's imagery works in precisely the same way (see Chapter I), apparently presenting the reader with a set of facilely interconnected concepts. The Lewisian image then moves on to work on another, more exploratory, level within the reader's mind, in order to suggest a wider and more startling set of connections and questions. His imagistic method, then, works contrapuntally, to create paradoxes which suggest new truths. Thus, I feel it is impossible to underestimate the force of laughter (simple, satirical, ironic or tragicomic) in Lewis's work. Nor can we undervalue the relevance of his use of the image, which becomes, under Lewis's pen, a kind of dynamic vignette, a capturing of the myriad facets of a diamond-like moment of existence.

CHAPTER I

SEX, VIOLENCE, AND SEX AS VIOLENCE

Section I: Images of Violence

Sexual Cannibalism

Was the mink to inquire of the panther whether he would always kiss so nicely, while he was giving the mink a preliminary lick before devouring his prey?

Lewis, "The War Baby," in Unlucky for Pringle: Unpublished and Other Stories, 101.

Images of sexual violence, sexually-based violence, or -- more aptly -- of sex as a form of violence, lend to Lewis's writing a dimension of psycho-sexual complexity which is never superficial and rarely one-sided, or unambiguous. In fact, violence often appears, in Lewis's work, as the basic medium of interaction, on the heterosexual or asexual plane. This violence occurs on both the psychic and the physical levels, and is a part of the process by which Lewis explores and externalizes the psycho-sexual ramifications and implications of human interaction. Lewis's treatment of these themes is demonstrated most clearly in the short story "Brotcotnaz," contained in the collection entitled The Wild Body.[1] This story brings together many of the themes explored in the other stories in this collection, as well as those represented elsewhere, in stories such as "Cantleman's Spring Mate" and "The War Baby," both of which were later republished in the 1973 collection entitled Unlucky for Pringle: Unpublished and Other Stories.

Initially, it might be assumed that the violence is merely physical, and directed against the woman, because of her physical inadequacies[2] or for both physical and psychological reasons[3]; however, such assumptions would be incomplete in an analysis of the relationship of mutual antagonism and destruction which is projected by Lewis as basic to man-woman interaction. The essential factor in the ~~man-~~woman relationship as projected by Lewis is this quality of violence, in fact; and it is a violence which is both psychic and physical, each of these two components catalyzing and compounding the other, as if the psychic qualities of warmth and tenderness coexisted absolutely in relation to physical violence.[4] Thus, sexual encounter is seen quintessentially as a form of mutual violence, a bilateral ravishment of body *and* psyche. A sense of this definition of sex is betrayed in the following passage, in which the speaker's amorous fantasy displays a view of sex not merely as cannibalistic, but also as an act of mutual rape, both physical and psychic:

> "No; no. I want none of your air-scullions. I want a woman so shy that she can hardly bear to be looked at. To undress her would be *like tearing a shell off a living crab*. Her nudity would be so indecent that I should rush out of the room, at first, in horror. She would at the same time faint on realizing that she was there --"[5] (The italics are mine.)

The passage above describes nothing less than a scene of mutual rape,[6] completely visualized on all sensual and psychic levels. I have italicized the similie of rasping violence which most clearly evokes the qualities of sensual and psychic violence which epitomize this fantasy scene. This scene in turn epitomizes the content and nature of man-woman sexuality, as often depicted by Lewis. As such, it is more than just a frightening extroversion of a certain type of sexually distorted sensibility -- it is a paradigm for the Lewisian version of male-female sexuality.

In Lewis's depiction of male-female sexuality, the concept of bilateral ravishment of both mind and body is allied with, and reinforced by, the parallel concept of consumption and cannibalism.[7] In the story "The War Baby,"[8] both structure and theme allow these concepts to follow closely one upon the other. Thus, Beresin's rapacious description of the kind of sexual encounter he is seeking is followed, just two pages later, by a description of the woman (Tets) as an article for consumption, not merely for Beresin's delectation, but, concomitantly, for her own as well. Here, we are presented with a portrait of woman as the consumer *and* the consumed, the object of her consumption being both herself and the man with whom she interacts. Thus, the concept of mutual ravishment (not unallied with real self-destruction) is clearly articulated:

> But still she brought with her into the room something like a rich aura of generations of passion. When he kissed her he felt as though he were at play with a fat and sceptical ghost. She blushed in a heavy sudden way, her wet lips expanded and closed, and expanded again on his lips, like *some strenuous amoeba*. If he looked into her eyes they appeared to open and receive him like some extremely remote stranger. Any part he *attacked*, then, awoke to half life, with gentle and deliberate responsive spasm. He felt that she could lie on his breast for hours or months as naturally as a plum on its stem against a wall, without restlessness. For he still had the sensation of her *consuming herself constantly*. All that happened when their bodies were pressed against each other was that she appeared burning away rather more quickly.[10] (The italics are mine.)

Here, Lewis describes a peculiar paradox of human passion: while one party consumes the other with his or her passionate attention, he or she is being consumed in turn by his or her own emotions, and by the psychic energy which is invested in such emotions. This curious anomaly is suggested in a uniquely Lewisian insight concerning the dimension of self consumption and mutual consumption which is part of passionate sexual expression; additionally, this is an insight which is not unlinked to Lewis's exploration of sex as a form of violence. The themes of self consumption, and violent mutual consumption or cannibalism are united, on the other hand, in many passages from "Beau Séjour":[11]

> I was very much disgusted by her for my part: what she suggested to me was something like a mad butcher, who had put a piece of bright material over a carcase of pork or mutton, and then started to ogle his customers, owing to a sudden shuffling in his mind of the respective appetites. Carl on this occasion behaved like the hallucinated customer of such a pantomime, who, come into the shop, had entered into the spirit of the demented butcher, and proceeded to waltz with his *sex-promoted food*.[12] The stupid madness, or commonplace wildness, that always shone in his eyes was at full blast as he jolted uncouthly hither and thither, while the proprietress undulated and crackled in complete independence, held roughly in place merely by his *two tentacles*.[13] (The italics are mine.)

In the closing sentence of this passage, Lewis completes the image of woman-as-object-of-consumption -- specifically, as meat -- by showing the man's arms as the hooks from which the meat hangs on display.[14] By extension, we may infer that Lewis is also implying the possibility that, in a relationship of mutual cannibalism and willing self-slaughter (the components of this particular man-woman interaction), the man provides the technological or natural base ("tentacles") which assists the woman in the display, sale and consumption of herself. This claim will be further substantiated if we relate this passage from "Beau Séjour" to the following extract from "The War Baby":

> He felt that she could lie on his breast for hours or months as naturally as a plum on its stem against a wall, without restlessness. For he still had the sensation of her consuming herself constantly.[15]

Similarly:

> He displaced himself and put his arms round her waist. She immediately became the plum on the wall, hanging heavily and ripely.[16]

In these last two extracts, the nature images indicate a more natural and seemingly less psychotic relationship of apparent interdependence, as what is being evoked is a natural process of symbiosis; however, on close consideration of the implications of this image, it seems clear that natural symbiosis is merely a euphemism for mutual consumption or cannibalism. The implications of this thought are echoed in the following passages, from "Beau Séjour" which provide an example of the epitomization of the concept of cannibalism as the main ingredient in sexuality:

> The 'Blue Danube' rolled on; Carl poured appreciative oily light into Mademoiselle Péronnette's eyes, she redoubled her lascivious fluxions, until Carl, having exhausted all the superlatives of the language of the eyes, cut short their rhythmical advance and, becoming immobile in the middle of the room, clasped her in his arms, where she *hung like a dying wasp, Carl devouring with much movement the lower part of her face, canted up with abandon*.[17] (The italics are mine.)

Additionally, we are told:

> Long before the end the forms of Carl and Mademoiselle Péronnette, head and shoulders above the rest of the company, were transfixed in the centre of the room, Carl *like a lanky black spider, always devouring but never making an end of his meal provided by the palpitating wasp in his arms* while the others bobbed on gently around them.[18] (The italics are mine.)

In these passages, the nature images take on a more sinister aspect than they project in the passages from "The War Baby": the cannibalism which is inherent in the natural cycle is clearly defined as being an essential part of human sexuality, which is in turn depicted as being merely one form in which this law of the natural cycle is revealed and apotheosized. Accordingly, the choice of image is dictated by the degree to which the object of consumption is active or passive: Lutitia ("Tets") is compared to the ripe fruit which is waiting to be plucked, and inwardly consuming itself in the very process of ripening, while the more active Mademoiselle Péronnette is compared -- more suitably, it is intimated -- to a wriggling insect, which of course has a sting of its own![19]

It must be clear to the reader that an examination of the implications of the images utilized by Lewis reveals the extent to which these images, by their varied reverberations, reinforce the thematic content which is part of Lewis's exploration. This assertion is basic to our view of the function of imagery, and also to our evaluation of Lewis as a consummately conscious craftsman, quite separate from our awareness of his achievements as a thinker.[20]

The description of Tets ("The War Baby") as a ripe plum is to be seen as an externalization of the concept of the woman as object-of-consumption, on the natural, rather than the manufactured, level.[21] Her luxuriant, sensuous responsiveness is seen as an entity which exists autonomously, it seems, like the lush quality of a mature, ripe product of nature. (And, as a sexual creature, this is precisely what she _is_, it is implied.) Thus, we are told:

> He displaced himself and put his arms round her waist. She immediately became the ripe plum on the wall, hanging heavily and ripely. The fruit of her breasts, which were large, was like a symbol of her entire flesh, hanging warmly and idly on the wall of her body. When his hand pressed these, her eyes fluttered and grew heavy. _They were much more the essential part of her than anything else_.[22] (The italics are mine.)

Almost naïvely, Lewis seems to be suggesting that, if Lutitia is like a fruit, and if her breasts are like pendulous fruits, then they are most emblematic of her essence. He seems here to have slipped into the cliché too often connected with observations of human physical sensuousness -- namely, the part is too naïvely taken for the whole, by a process of fragmentation which is the basic principle of pornography.[23] Thus, the assertion that Lutitia's breasts "*were*" (rather than "*seemed*") to be the most essential part of her being can be taken as an example of that type of fragmentation which has become one of the most universal methods of extroversion of the female form. The cliché concept which views the female breast as the symbol of all that is quintessentially female has been reinforced in popular mythology by every sort of fragmentary consideration or depiction of that breast (preferably large and very rounded) as the microcosmic symbol of all that is desirable in the female.[24] This reference may well be a small lapse *or* a deliberate irony on Lewis's part, but it is a crucial one; we may therefore wonder idly why Beresin remains halted in preoccupation with this particular part of Tets's anatomy.[25]

Whatever may be the final implications of the above, however, Lewis moves on, in a structural and imagistic crescendo, to a single climactic and unequivocal sentence, which, as a statement, throws into relief, and lends balance to, the preceding images of consumption. This sentence is also one of a number of similarly climactic sentences or statements which -- throughout Lewis's fictional work -- reveal all the ambivalences contained in preceding images, and in the accompanying expectations established in the reader's mind. This type of redemptive statement is akin to the swan image related to Bertha in Tarr,[26] and to numerous such redemptive passages and images which surround Hester (Self Condemned)[27] and Margot (The Revenge for Love).[28] (These images, their content and relevance, will be dealt with elsewhere; what must now be noted is the fact that Lewis applies, at this point in the story "The War Baby," a device of hindsight and "doublethink" -- or the awareness of ambivalence -- which shakes the reader's presuppositions and challenges the imagination by liberating all the ambiguities of the preceding image pattern.) It is in the context of these claims that I think the following sentence must be seen and interpreted:

> Just as the jolliest romances are apt to draw up abashed before too naked realities, so presumably his light-hearted lechery had been damped and cowed to its nursery by the contact of a full being.[29] (The italics are mine.)

Thus, contrary to earlier considerations, we may view the fruit-comparison as a way in which the reader is shocked into a sudden recognition which expands his consciousness: Lutitia's full breasts may have been described in a seemingly fulsome way, but we are now being reminded that she is, transcendentally, not just a luscious body, but rather -- and more importantly -- a "full being" -- much fuller, it is implied, than this man who admires only her more superficial, though no less "full," attractions. This represents an example of the Lewisian technique of paradox and imagistic challenge which must be noted; recurring throughout his works most dynamically in relation to female characters, this is a means by which unnoticed levels of meaning and presupposition are challenged and exploded, so as to liberate the imagination for more profound and complex exploration.

The sentence previously analyzed is merely inserted at this point, however, to give a preliminary shake to the reader's presuppositions; it is followed (as a further reinforcement of the principle of paradox) by a passage of sheer, ironic understatement, itself a massive expression of the concept of sex as consumption and as violence-related:

> The next morning Beresin found a warm mass beside him in bed, and realized, *as he would have done at the presence of a pool of blood or a dead body*, that the preceding evening had been marked by a human event. The mass stirred, and a cumbrous *bestial* scented arm passed round his body. In the middle of a thick primitive gush of hair, he found the lips with their *thoughtful* pathetic spasm. He looked with curiousity and uneasiness at what he found so near to him.
>
> *The corpses of the battlefield had perhaps cheapened flesh*? Anyway, realities were infectious; and all women seemed to feel that they should have their luxurious battles, too; only they were playing at dying, and their war was fruitful.
>
> "Willie, do you love me a little bit?"
>
> What should he say? He loved her as much as he loved a luscious meadow full of sheep, or the side of a tall house illuminated by a sunset, or any pleasant sight or sound that he might meet. But that is not what women mean by "do you love me?" He understood that. They mean, "Do you think that perpetual intercourse with me for the rest of your life would be a nice thing?" That was hardly a question to put to a sentimental theorist of nobility, a dealer in hardness. *Was the mink to inquire of the panther whether he would always kiss so nicely, while he was giving the mink a preliminary lick before devouring his prey*?[30] (The italics are mine.)

The final sentence of this passage sums up monumentally the concept of sex as cannibalism or consumption; it also combines and transcends all the ambivalences and implications of the Lewisian image of consumption in ways that hint at the societal framework of violence and waste (the reference to the battlefield) as opposed to personal, and therefore animal, predation. Thus, the image pattern of the story is brought full circle, to rebound upon itself and upon the reader's consciousness, in a way that is peculiarly and dynamically Lewisian. And, within the context of this image pattern, the final ironies of

Tets' pregnancy, death, while giving birth to Beresin's suitably non-aristocratic child are intimated to the reader in a single reference of understatement and metaphor: this reveals that Tets, in her own way, gains her own sort of victory:

> Billie and Caroline had been other forms of Tets. But Tets was enthroned; for although one of several, she was softly sculpting a Totem, whereas others had not had that art -- *or craft*.[31] (The italics are mine.)

If we accept the foregoing argument concerning the force of the image and the dynamic awareness of ambivalence produced by the added dimensions of paradox, then certain questions and contradictions will arise. Among these, the most important (as it sums up the content of all these contradictions) will be as follows: do the bird images (the images of a mother bird feeding or tending its young) which cluster around the Margot/Victor relationship in *The Revenge for Love* project this relationship as one of mutual tenderness and caring, rather than one of mutual cannibalism? Two examples of such imagery may be examined in the following passages, before any guesses are hazarded as to the solution of this dilemma:

> He sat upon a cushion, leoninely slumped back against the panelling, as if luxuriating in a technical knockout. And Margot sat beside him. He was eating a *kouskous* out of a porringer, brought him by Margot steaming hot, from where it was being prepared by the hostess. When she had first smelt it in the air and realized that public cooking was afoot, as a midnight one-course supper, considering how she could contrive to get a double-helping for her 'manoo' mine, wrestling with her bashfulness, Margot had started off upon as uncomplex an errand *as a bird that quits the nest at an unexpected promise of fresh worms*.[32] (The italics are mine.)

Similarly:

> Victor slept. In sleep he was heroic, with the balance of the High Renaissance in the proud dispersal of his limbs. He slumbered upon Sean's cushions as if upon iron clouds, in a Michelangelesque

abandon. Margot watched him, with the maternal patience of a tiny bird mounting guard over a giant cuckoo foisted upon it, which she loved more than the child of her own humble egg.[33] (The italics are mine.)

The answer to the questions which revolve around the use and meaning of such imagery in The Revenge for Love may well depend on what one considers the relation of plot, action and imagery as dynamics of form. Alternatively, is it not also possible, and in no way contradictory -- given a view of human interaction as being quintessentially paradoxical and ambiguous -- that Lewis should use those very kinds of images (images of consumption) which may elsewhere denote mutual sexual and psychic cannibalism to here portray a relationship of mutual tenderness and caring? In short, is Lewis, through the exploratory use of image and ambiguity, indicating the provocatively dualistic intuition that, in the human context, tenderness and caring are not, after all, so far removed from what might ostensibly seem their polar opposites, sexual cannibalism and psychic carnage? If we view the Lewisian image as a dynamic, rather than static, formal entity, this latter suggestion should not be ignored.

Sex and Violence

It should be noted that the violence of individual encounters, whether on the physical, the psychic, or the psycho-sexual plane, is always placed by Lewis within a larger context of actual or potential social violence.[34] Similarly, also, Lewis views the "sex-war"[35] or "The war of 'one half against the other'"[36] as simultaneously a reflection and product of, and also a diversion from, the larger conflicts which dominate human society as a whole -- the absolute concerns of the totalitarian search for power.[37] Thus, it is during Beresin's short leave from the army that he forces his contact with Lutitia to its most actively sexual expression;[38] similarly, it is just before Cantleman's departure for the Front that his own sexual urges reach their catalytic peak:

> In a week he was leaving for the Front, for the first time. *So his thoughts and sensations all had, as a philosophic background, the prospect of death*. The infantry and his commission, implied death or mutilation unless he were very lucky. He had not a high opinion of his luck. He was pretty miserable at the thought, in a deliberate, unemotional way. But as he realized this he again laughed, *a similar sound to that that the girl had caused*.[39] (The italics are mine.)

This passage is very important since it demonstrates the fact that Lewis shows societal violence setting the scene for individual psychic, and psycho-sexual carnage; furthermore, the individual being examined is shown as responding to the thought of death in the same fashion that marks his response to the sexual stimulus -- namely, with laughter. The implications of this fact become clear if we see it in context of Lewisian theories about laughter and the comic.[40] Cantleman, however, is incapable of truly therapeutic laughter, which would resolve and accept the vision of the absurd in himself *and* the contradictions in nature and human life.[41] Cantleman's laughter is his response to two different motifs in his environment and immediate experience -- the sexual, as represented by the rural girl whom he meets, *and* the mortal, as represented by the thought of the reality of the likelihood of his imminent death. Sex, death and supernatural beauty are also shown as being combined in the natural environment:

> The only jarring note in this vast mutual admiration society was the fact that many of its members showed their fondness for their neighbour in an embarrassing way: that is they killed and ate them. But the weaker were so used to dying violent deaths and being eaten that they worried very little about it. -- The West was gushing up a harmless volcano of fire, obviously intended as an immense dreamy nightcap.[42]

Cantleman, however, is incapable of a basic identification with his natural environment, or of the realization of himself as part of the larger natural cycle which involves, includes, *but utilizes and transcends* violence for purposes of mutual interdependence and survival. Cantleman's laughter, therefore, does not indicate the insight and perception which may be represented in the reality of laughter as one of the dynamic facts of human reaction and interaction. Cantleman's laughter lacks the dimension of self-awareness which is essential to the true sense of the comic; his laughter is, instead, a response which is one-dimensional, ignoring the truths which are basic to these theories put forward by Lewis on the subject of laughter:

> What is it far more difficult to appreciate, with any constancy, is that, whatever his relative social advantages or particular national virtues may be, every man is profoundly open to the same criticism or ridicule from any opponent who is only different enough. Again, *it is comparatively easy to see that another man, as an animal, is absurd; but it is far more difficult to observe oneself in that hard and exquisite light. But no man has ever continued to live who has ever observed himself in that manner for longer than a flash. Such consciousness must be of the nature of a thunderbolt. Laughter is only summer-lightning. But it occasionally takes on the dangerous form of absolute revelation*.[43] (The italics are mine.)

Similarly, Lewis comments elsewhere:

> Laughter -- humour and wit -- has a function in relation to our tender consciousness; a function similar to that of art. It is the preserver much more than the destroyer. And, in a sense, *everyone* should be laughted at or else *no one* should be laughed at. It seems that ultimately that is the alternative.[44]

Seen in this context, it is clear that Cantleman's laugh is both the symptom and product of his truncated sensibility; in short, Cantleman's laughter, and the sources of it, reveal his lack of a true and comprehensive view of life, which would include an awareness of himself as part of a larger, universal, comedy, tragedy, or tragicomedy. This point is clear, if we see Lewis's fiction in context of his theoretical framework -- in this case, his critical and philosophical discourses. It is also plainly articulated in the closing sentences of the short story:

> Cantleman on his walk to camp, had a smile of severe satisfaction on his face. It did not occur to him that his action might be supremely unimportant as far as Stella was concerned. He had not even asked himself if, had he not been there that night, someone else might have been there in his place. He was also convinced that the laurels were his, and that Nature had come off badly. -- He was still convinced of this when he received six weeks afterwards in France, a long appeal from Stella, telling him that she was going to have a child. She received no answer to that or any subsequent letter. Cantleman received [them] with great regularity in the trenches, and read them all through from beginning to end, without comment of any sort. -- And when he beat a German's brains out it was with the same impartial malignity that he had displayed in the English night with his Springmate. Only he considered there too that he was in some way outwitting Nature, and had no adequate realization of the extent to which evidently the death of a Hun was to the advantage of the [animal] world.[45]

Obviously, the foregoing tracing of the expression of similar views through the use of dissimilar forms (the short story and the essay, as quoted) must be seen as an illustration of the basic unity in Lewis's work, and of the extent to which all disparate pieces contribute, in a comprehensive artistic achievement, to a total construct of thought.

Cantleman is the embodiment of the concept of the one as opposed to the Crowd.[46] He is arrogantly preoccupied with what he considers his own solitary superiority; he carries this attitude into his relation -- which is really a *non*-relation -- with nature. Thus, he is described as walking along, "*dissecting* the daisies specked in the small wood, the primroses on the banks, the marshy lakes, *and all God's creatures*."[47] This sense of solitary superiority -- only, in the final analysis, a very dangerous form of alienation on the psychic and sensuous plane -- also marks his attitude toward sexuality. Therefore, his sexual encounter with the country girl, Stella, is (negatively) compared to the act of *spitting*, as seen in the following description:

> That night he spat out, in gushes of thick delicious rage, all the lust that had gathered in his body. The nightingale sang ceaselessly in the small wood at the top of the field where they lay. He *grinned* up towards it as he noticed it, and once more turned to the *devouring of his mate*. He bore down on her as though he wished to mix her body into the soil, and pour his seed into a more methodless matter, the brown phalanges of floury land. As their two bodies shook and melted together, *he felt that he was raiding the bowels of Nature: he was proud that he could remain deliberately aloof*, and gaze bravely, like a minute insect, up at the immense and melancholy night, with all its mad nightingales, piously folded small brown wings in a million nests, night-working stars, and misty useless watchmen.[48]
> (The italics are mine.)

As it is for René, (the male protagonist of the novel *Self Condemned*) sexual activity is, for Cantleman, an angry business, all aggression, and no tenderness. Thus, we are immediately reminded of the following passages from the story "The War Baby," describing the very different responses of Beresin and Tets after their sexual encounter:

> The next morning Beresin found a warm mass beside him in bed, and realized, as he would have done at the presence of a pool of blood or a dead body, that the preceding evening had been marked by a human event. The mass stirred, and a cumbrous bestial scented arm passed round his body. In the middle of a thick primitive gush of hair, he found the lips with their thoughtful pathetic spasm. He looked with curiosity and uneasiness at what he found so near to him.

> The corpses of the battlefield had perhaps cheapened flesh? Anyway, realities were infectious; and all women seemed to feel that they should have their luxurious battles, too; only they were playing at dying, and their war was fruitful.
>
> "Willie, do you love me a little bit?"
>
> What should he say?[49]

In an important way, this passage seems to sum up the dialectic of the sexes and of sexuality, revealing sexuality as a form of cannibalism. This is also a depiction which is crucial to the rendering of male/female interaction in all of Lewis's work. Thus, we can see this passage as a paradigm for the depiction of such relations, and their accompanying dialogue, throughout Lewis's works, often finding parallels elsewhere.

Cantleman, then, may be seen as the personification of class snobbery, alienated humanity, and violent sexuality. He is filled with hatred -- of his fellow-men, of self, of his natural environment, and of the war; the harshness of his feelings -- often expressed in sardonic laughter -- makes him a figure _at_ war, and _of_ war, so to speak. Ill at ease amid the beauties and contradictions[50] of Nature, he seeks to outwit her, in an arrogant violent, yet vain, way. His sensibility is revealed as being tainted by his awareness of the reality of the violence of war, and the violent inequalities of the societal framework, as is seen in the following description:

> Once more on the following evening he was out in the fields, and once more his thoughts were engaged in recapitulations. -- The miraculous camouflage of Nature did not deceive this observer. He saw everywhere the gun-pits and the "nests of death." Each puff of green leaves he knew was _in some way as harmful as the burst of a shell._ Decay and ruins, it is true, were soon covered up, but there was yet that parallel, and the sight of things smashed and corrupted. In the factory town ten miles away to the right, whose smoke could be seen, _life was just as dangerous for the poor, and as uncomfortable, as for the soldier in his trench_. _The hypocrisy of Nature and the hypocrisy of War were the same_. The only safety in life was for the

> man with the soft job. But that fellow was not conforming to life's conditions. He was life's paid man, and had the mark of the sneak. He was making too much of life, and too much out of it. *He, Cantleman, did not want to owe anything to life, or enter into league or understanding with her*. The thing was either to go out of existence: or, failing that, remain in it *unreconciled, indifferent to Nature's threat, consorting openly with her enemies, making war within her war upon her servants*. In short, the spectacle of the handsome English spring produced nothing but ideas of *defiance* in Cantleman's mind.[51] (The italics are mine.)

The natural environment provides Cantleman, and the reader, with adequate examples of the sexual voracity and the cannibalism[52] which Cantleman himself bitterly practices, once he has submerged his class-based reservations about Stella, the rural girl, whom he would have liked more had she been more suitably born. As it is, he merely uses her to relieve himself of what he regards as "this humiliating gnawing and yearning in his blood."[53]

Social violence is not the only ingredient in the setting of the Cantleman story. Natural violence, and the role of such violence in the eternal cycle which controls and creates human life is another such ingredient; so also is the principle of carnality and sensual activity, not unallied with sensuous beauty. Thus, the opening passage of *Cantleman's Spring Mate* encompasses a description of fresh, natural beauty (seen in the flowers and trees), buzzing activity and vital, carnal sexuality on the part of the animals and insects. The fact that the activity of the animals includes both carnal sexuality and voracious cannibalism is not seen or presented as being in any way incongruous; rather, the combination of the carnal, the sensual and the cannibalistic are seen as being merely different, but not inconsistent, motifs in the total natural pattern:

> The only jarring note in this bast admiration society was the fact that many of its members showed their fondness for their neighbour in an embarrassing way: that is they killed and ate them. But the weaker were so used to dying violent deaths and being eaten that they worried very little about it.[54]

Thus, the tone of the following description is one of naturalism, of *sang-froid*, almost of gaiety, in fact:

> The birds with their little gnarled feet, and beaks made for fishing worms out of the mould, or the river, would have considered Shelley's references to the skylark -- or any other poet's paeans to their species -- as lamentably inadequate to describe the beauty of birds! The female bird, for her particular part, reflected that, in spite of the ineptitude of her sweetheart's latest song, which he insisted on deafening her with, never seemed to tire of, and was so persuaded that she liked as much as he did himself, and although outwardly she remained critical and vicious: that all the same and nevertheless, chock, chock, peep, peep, he was a *fluffy object from which certain satisfaction could be derived*! And both the male and the female reflected together as they stood a foot or so apart looking at each other with one eye, and at the landscape with the other, *that of all nourishment the red earth-worm was the juiciest and sweetest*! The sow, as she watched her hog, with his splenetic energy, and guttural articulation, a sound between content and complaint, not noticing the untidy habits of both of them, gave a sharp grunt of sex-hunger, and jerked rapidly towards Him. [sic][55] (The italics are mine.)

In the midst of this exposition of carnality and violence naturally yoked together, Cantleman is "humiliated" by his own sexually-oriented thoughts.[56] In short, he may be able to recognize or "dissect" the combined principles of carnality and carnage in nature, but he cannot, or does not, see his own capacity for sexuality as nothing more than just another expression of the overall principle of animality within the larger framework of natural existence. Instead, he vainly imagines himself apart from, and above, the principle of carnality as expressed in his own active sexuality, even as he, like the animals, turns towards "the devouring of his mate":[57]

> As their two bodies shook and melted together, he felt that he was raiding the bowels of Nature: *he was proud that he could remain deliberately aloof, and gaze bravely, like a minute insect, up at the immense and melancholy night*, with all its mad nightingales, piously folded small brown wings in a million nests, night-working stars, and misty useless watchmen.[58] (The italics are mine.)

Thus, even at the very moment of climax of his sexual self-expression, Cantleman is a divided, arrogantly alienated personality -- in short, a *tainted animal*. All of this is true *despite* his intellectual desire that humans should assume the purity of their carnality, so as to achieve the peace inherent in the natural environment:

> The newspapers were the things that stank most on earth, and human beings anywhere were *the most ugly and offensive of the brutes because of the confusion caused by their* consciousness. Had it not been for that unmaterial gift that some bungling or wild hand had bestowed, our sisters and brothers would be no worse than dogs and sheep. That they could not reconcile their *little meagre streams of sublimity with the needs of animal life* should not be railed at. Well then, should not the sad amalgam, all it did, all it willed, all it demanded, be thrown over, for the fake and confusion that it was, and should not such as possessed a greater quantity of that wine of reason, retire, metaphorically to the wilderness, and sit forever in a formal and gentle elation, refusing to be disturbed?[59] (The italics are mine.)

Clearly, then, despite his intellectual musings to the contrary, Cantleman's sexual escapade is merely another aspect of his intellectual posturing: he is incapable, because of his own fundamental alienation from himself and his fellow humans, of a real abandonment of the self to sensual experience; he is only, and no better than, the mere product of his society, a tainted animal.

Cantleman regards Stella, as he does all women, as being "contaminated with Nature's hostile power."[60] And, just as he scorns and attacks the natural world and its activities, so his sexual interaction with Stella is hostile -- in fact, a sexual and psychic assault. Fitting expressions of this fact are the metaphor of spitting[61] used vis-à-vis his sexual activity, and the further description of this assault as the spitting, out of himself, and into Stella, of "gushes of thick delicious rage."[62] The sense of Cantleman's sexually-based paranoia increases when we realize that we have been given no reason for his hostility towards both nature and woman; rather, this hostility is conveyed as a part of his mode of consciousness, a part of his world view[63] and sensibility. This is a depiction of paranoia which is, ironically, counterbalanced by the writer's intimation that Cantleman is, for all his "impartial malignity,"[64] still only an unwittingly contributing part of, or factor in, a larger pattern, which is the natural cycle. This intimation is the final irony of the story -- but it is only one of a number of such ironies which, throughout Lewis's writings, place man, suitably and inscrutably, within his larger and more powerful context, the natural environment. It is this placement which, finally and lucidly, separates the writer from his protagonist's paranoia, defining that paranoia as being a deliberate and conscious artistic creation, rather than the impingement on Lewis's matter of some private abberation.[65] Because of this fact, "Cantleman's Spring Mate" is an extremely important piece of writing within the total framework of Lewis's work, both philosophically and otherwise. Furthermore, we may conclude from this story that Lewis is indicating that man's lack of awareness of his own minor place within the larger framework of the natural world -- and, in fact, his arrogant and aggressive competition with, and invasion of, that world -- are basic to the cause of human displacement, futility, alienation and destruction.

This assertion leads, in turn, into crucial analytical premises which we hope to establish and explore in connection with the novel Self Condemned.

Footnotes

[1] The Wild Body, 207-231.

[2] Ibid., 219-220.

[3] Ibid., 79.

[4] Thus, after he has beaten her up, Brotcotnaz treats his wife Julie with great tenderness and care. See "Brotcotnaz," in The Wild Body (collection), 219-220. Cf. Erin Pizzey's study of wife abuse in Scream Quietly or The Neighbours Will Hear.

[5] I have italicized this simile to stress the quality of violence which is the mark of this description of sexuality. See "The War Baby," in Unlucky for Pringle, 95, also in Art and Letters, II, 1 (Winter 1918-19), 27.

[6] Cf. Susan Brownmiller's analysis of rape as basically an act of aggression, rather than of sexual desire, in Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape.

[7] Cf. Margaret Atwood's exploration of the theme of consumption on the socio-economic, emotional and sexual planes in The Edible Woman, Surfacing and Lady Oracle; these themes, consciously and unconsciously explored, form the content of these works.

[8] Unlucky for Pringle, 85-108.

[9] Ibid., 95.

[10] Ibid., 98, and Art and Letters, op. cit., 29.

[11] See The Wild Body (collection), 65-107.

[12] Cf. vis-à-vis the italicized phrase ("sex-promoted food"), B. Friedan's chapter entitled "The Sexual Sell," in The Feminine Mystique, 197-223. The implications of the phrase in terms of the concept of sexual cannibalism are clear, additionally.

[13] The Wild Body, 91.

[14] In this regard, compare the cover picture on the jacket of the Paladin (1971 and 1972) edition of Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch.

[15] Unlucky for Pringle, 98. (I have repeated the use of this quotation for purposes of emphasis and comparison.)

[16] Ibid., 98.

[17] The Wild Body, 92.

[18] Ibid., 93.

[19] As Mademoiselle Péronnette ends up by being cheated out of her ownership of Beau Séjour (see The Wild Body, 105), one may wonder where indeed was her sting! Obviously, in this case, the female was not deadlier than the male!

[20] This is a view which is one of the basic emphases in this thesis, as stated in the Introduction.

[21] Part of the popular "Earth-mother myth" perhaps?

[22] Unlucky for Pringle, 98.

[23] Wilfred Watson, lectures given in seminar at the University of Alberta, Department of English, in 1973-4.

[24] See M. Nashner and M. White, "Beauty and the Breast -- A 60-percent Complication rate for an Operation You Don't Need," in Ms. Magazine, VI, 3 (September, 1977), 53-54 and 84-85. This issue is, of course, aggravated by the vision of too many bosomy centrefolds in such magazines as Playboy and Penthouse, which reveal the popular versions of fragmentation as a basis for pornography, and multi-million-dollar industries.

[25] With regard to this question, compare Sigismund's semi-obsessive attention to the palm of his wife's hand, in the short story, "Sigismund," in The Wild Body collection, 260-263.

[26] Lewis, Tarr, 307.

[27] Examples of such images are examined elsewhere.

[28] Examples of such images are examined elsewhere.

[29] Unlucky for Pringle, 99.

[30] Ibid., 100-101. Cf. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 282.

[31] Ibid., 106.

[32] The Revenge for Love, 170.

[33] Ibid., 179.

[34] See J.D. Allen's analysis of the possible effect of war on Lewis's point of view in The Apollonian-Dionysian Conflict in the Works of Wyndham Lewis.

[35] Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 215.

[36] The Art of Being Ruled, 205.

[37] Ibid., cf. p. 205-208 and 262-266.

[38] Unlucky for Pringle, 99-100.

[39] Ibid., 78.
It is important to note that Cantleman responds to both the thought of death, and to the sexual stimulus (represented by the girl) in the same manner, by laughing.

[40] Cf. The Wild Body, 243-250, and Studies in the Art of Laughter (The London Mercury, 30. 180 (Oct. 1934) 509-515).

[41] Studies in the Art of Laughter, op. cit., 514.

[42] Unlucky for Pringle, 78.

[43] The Wild Body, 245.

[44] Studies in the Art of Laughter, op. cit., 512.

[45] Unlucky for Pringle, 84-85. Also, I have included the word "animal," as it appears in the other printed versions of this story, and, I think, serves to indicate my arguments at this point.

[46] This concept is a major theme in Lewis's Enemy of the Stars.

[47] Unlucky for Pringle, 77. (The italics are mine.)

[48] Ibid., 83.

[49] Ibid., 100-101. (I am quoting this passage again, this time as part of a different construct of thought.)

[50] Ibid., 77-78. (The natural cycle is seen as one whose basic principle is cannibalism, since the animals must eat each other to survive.)

[51] Ibid., 82-83.

[52] Ibid., 77-78.

[53] Ibid., 83.

[54] Ibid., 78.

[55] Ibid., 77-78.

[56] Ibid., 78.

[57] Ibid., 83.

[58] Ibid., 83. This particular quotation is repeated here for purposes of emphasis.

[59] Ibid., 79.

[60] Ibid., 83.

[61] Ibid., 83.

[62] Ibid., 83.

[63] This may also be seen as a result of Cantleman's immersion in artificial social values. Similarly his dislike for his fellow officers is clearly based in social prejudice, rather than in personal interaction, as he does _not_ interact with them. (See pages 80-81.)

[64] _Unlucky for Pringle_, 84.

[65] These assertions must be noted especially with regard to the assumptions underlying J.D. Allen's thesis, _The Apollonian-Dionysian Conflict in the Works of Wyndham Lewis_.

Section II: The Tragicomedy of Sex

Sex -- The Natural Handicap

Let us say that women are men with a handicap. It is a natural handicap.
Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 196.

As demonstrated in the above statement, Lewis has pinpointed the relentless position in which women have been placed by nature, destiny or God,[1] by society, and by history. With clarity, he delineates theirs as a position of subservience, inferiority and victimization; additionally, he reveals the agony and ruin which he sees as the inevitable result of their always abortive efforts to free themselves from their handicapped position and pursue their own needs autonomously. However, despite the clarity with which he voices these recognitions, Lewis does not make any concessions to these oppressed people, or allow any compensations to their positions as victims. Rather, in Lewis's treatment of her, woman falls victim once again -- this time, she is victim of a unique form of satire, at once incisive and ambivalent. In short, while mocking the female penchant for romanticism -- a fatal trait -- Lewis reveals, willy-nilly, that this recourse to fantasy is one of the few palliatives with which women can distract themselves from the painful vision of their own miserable fate. Thus, Lewis defines the aspect of real tragicomedy which marks woman's obsession with the manufacture of love -- also viewed as a spiritual or psychic palliative.[2] Not surprisingly, Lewis emerges as an unequivocal exposer of the female condition -- and a surprisingly equivocal judge of this phenomenon. And, despite the laughter which they provoke because of their flights into romanticism, and their abidingly naïve belief in their manufactured ideal of man-woman love, it is not surprising either that Lewis's women usually embody within themselves an element of the tragic.

In the two sentences from Lewis's writing quoted at the beginning of this section, Lewis is establishing a premise which is essential to the depiction of male-female relationships (and their absence) in all of his works. In fact, if we continue this train of thought, as substantiated by major themes relating to the depiction of man-woman interaction in Lewis's works, we could further posit: the woman who pursues her own sexual desires to the fullest extent courts social, financial, personal and psychological destruction; woman is at a psychological and physiological disadvantage because of her biological position -- namely, she is able to become pregnant.[3] (Pregnancy itself may be defined as the frustrating experience of being only the bearer of the secret of the miracle of continuity, and not its creator, or sharer.) If we follow Lewis's thinking about what he refers to as woman's "handicap," then, we are reminded that pregnancy, or the capacity for pregnancy, limits woman's range and potential as a sexual creature.[4] To further substantiate Lewis's claim, it must be admitted that the only woman who is sexually free to pursue her sexual needs on the plane on which men ordinarily do, or on the widest level natural to her personality, is the woman who is past childbearing years, or who is infertile. It must be stressed that the contraceptive pill or the intra-uterine device can only produce a new enslavement for women: the woman whose body houses a foreign object may feel galvanized into maximal sexual activity in order to justify the existence of this foreign body within her very womb; similarly, the woman who takes the contraceptive pill may feel somehow obliged to legitimate the taking of twenty-one pills per month by having sex at least twenty-one times per month also, as an expression of her resentment of the psychological self-programming involved in pill-taking, and of the physiological risks which may be part of the pill's unknown side-effects. Obviously, such sex-seeking becomes a process of justification, not pleasure. It seems like a logical and natural compensation, then, that women should reach their sexual peak only towards the close of the fertile period. This natural compensation is a far more real solace than any of the ambiguous privileges accorded to women by society.[5] In fact, it is clear that, in our contemporary preoccupation with the search for an uncompromisingly youthful love-goddess image, we have missed the point that it is nature's particular gift to women to qualify them functionally -- i.e., sexually -- for this role later, rather than earlier, in life.[6] In this respect, Lewis too is apparently blind to a very real compensation in the natural scheme accorded to women by nature rather than society: this shortsightedness is a product of a conventional and conservative view of female sexuality which Lewis does not project consistently at all.[7]

As a further projection from Lewis's statement concerning the handicapped state of women, it can also be seen that the physiological handicaps of women range from their usually inferior size (as compared to that of men generally) to the locally inferior position which is theirs in traditional sex positions. In this regard, one might feel tempted to feel reassured by Lewis's repeated depiction of the large woman. (Hester of Self Condemned, Anastaysia of Tarr, and April of The Vulgar Streak are all tall women.) However, it is clear that physical bulk is an advantage which these women never utilize, either on the physical or the psychological level. In fact, those psychic compensations to be gained from the use of the body as an instrument of sexual or other forms of aggression (another instance where physical bulk can be an asset) never accrue to Lewis's women, large or small. On the contrary, Lewis's women pay dearly for any attempt to freely pursue sexual gratification for themselves principally. The price of such gratification, or the quest for it, is paid in terms of social, financial, and/or psychological ruin. Clearly, the woman as sexual animal, aggressor, or active sex-seeker is an object of disgust to the Lewisian observer; she is a disgusting spectacle to whom is meted out a disgusting punishment.

The treatment given to Mademoiselle Péronnette (the female protagonist of the short story "Beau Séjour," from the Collection The Wild Body) and to Hester (Self Condemned) by both the Lewisian raconteur and by the other characters in the respective works, provides adequate examples of the manner in which women in Lewis's works are punished for active pursuit of sexual gratification. (It is interesting to note that Mademoiselle Péronnette is also a large woman.[8]) Because of the havoc wrought in the organization of her boarding-house by her own indulgence in a violent and passionate love affair with Carl, an unworthy and mercenary suitor, Mademoiselle Péronnette is eventually ruined, and loses her financial investment. Her position is usurped by one of the very people who had taken advantage of her hospitality, Zoborov. Thus, when the raconteur revisits the hotel, entitled indicatively, "Beau Séjour," he finds that the old order of sentimentality, passion, violence, and financial confusion has disappeared -- and so has the former proprietor, who was unwise enough to pursue sexual and sentimental, rather than financial, satisfactions:

> "You look prosperous," I said.
>
> "Do you think so? I'm en breton now, you see! When are you coming over to see us at Beau Séjour? This gentleman was at Beau Séjour," he said, turning to his friends. "Are you stopping in the neighbourhood? I'll send the trap over for you."
>
> "The trap? Have they a trap now?"
>
> "A trap? Why yes, my friend. There have been great changes since you were at Beau Séjour!"
>
> "Indeed. Of what kind?"
>
> "Of every kind, my friend!"
>
> "How is Mademoiselle Péronnette?"
>
> "Oh, she's gone, long ago!"
>
> "Indeed!"
>
> "Why yes, she and old Carl left soon after you." He paused a moment. "I am the proprietor now!"
>
> "You!"
>
> "Why yes, my friend, me! Mademoiselle Péronnette went bust. Beau Séjour was sold at auction as it stood. It was not expensive. I took the place on. -- Mais oui, mon ami, je suis maintenant le proprietaire!" He seized me by the shoulder, then lightly tapped me there. "C'est drôle, n'est-ce-pas?"
>
> I seemed to hear the voice of Mademoiselle Maraude replying, "En effet."
>
> "En effet!" I said.[9]

Callously enough, "drôle" is the description given to the ruin of a woman who has been both used and abused because of her pursuit of the perfectly legitimate goal of sexual love. But then, it is clear that Lewis questions whether such pursuit is ever legitimate in the case of women -- and rather, it is seen as a vice and a weakness, of a quite carnal and disgusting sort, for which they are inevitably punished, by society, by circumstance, by those who are the very objects of their love (Carl tries to shoot Mademoiselle Péronnette[10]), and even by their very own psyches. (Hester's suicide may be seen as a cruel punishment which she metes out to herself; similarly, René's verbal assaults upon her are simply his way of punishing her for her frank admission of sexual need.) Thus, there is a telling similarity between the disgust with which the raconteur of "Beau Séjour" reacts to Mademoiselle Péronnette and the nauseated dread with which René observes his wife. In the former case, the raconteur observes:

> Carl and Mademoiselle Péronnette danced. She was a big woman, about thirty. Her empty energetic face was pretty, but rather dully and evenly laid out. Her back when en fete was a long serpentine blank with an embroidered spine. When she got up to dance she held herself forward, bare arms hanging on either side, two big meaty handles, and she undulated her nuque and back while she drew her mouth down into the tense bow of an affected kiss. While she held her croupe out stiffly in the rear, in muscular prominence, her eyes burnt at you with traditional gallic gallantry, her eyebrows arched in bland acceptance (a static "Mais oui, si vous voulez!") of french sex-convention, the general effect intended to be "witty" and suggestive, without vulgarity. I was very much disgusted by her for my part: what she suggested to me was something like a mad butcher, who had put a piece of bright material over a carcase of pork or mutton, and then started to ogle his customers, owing to a sudden shuffling in his mind of the respective appetites.[11]

The following description, taken from the novel Self Condemned,[12] reveals the sexually-based loathing which is typical of René's attitude toward his wife, Hester. Clearly, the loathing and disgust[13] -- not unmixed with a certain paranoia, one is persuaded -- which mark René's attitude are not dissimilar to those same qualities evoked in the raconteur's description of Mademoiselle Péronnette:

> However, not long afterwards, thoroughly purged of her mother, and all the endearing scenes of the life she was leaving, Hester's mind turned to the function that awaited them in an hour or so. She passed nimbly over René and began opening up their cabin luggage, and picking out what she would require. She was watched morosely by René, who lay, a little somnolent upon the bed. She darted hither and thither, as if pretending, as it seemed to him, to find something: and assuming a series of display poses, as though she had been

> modelling for *Esquire*'s most risqué draughtsman. He wondered if she worked out these poses when he was not there. What a way of spending one's life. *She was the most frightful reflection of himself, the image of his lubricity*. Worse than pinning up *Esquire* in his room, he maintained a live *Esquire* colour-block -- he had always been teasing himself after this fashion. Oh well, what more, what better had he to do now, except that! Hester's *obscene* person must henceforth be his Muse, in succession to History. He was going to Canada in order to *fornicate* with Hester. What else![14] (The italics are mine.)

In considering the above passage, the reader should note that I have italicized certain words, which denote most clearly, it seems to me, the paranoia, loathing and suspicion with which René reacts to Hester's spontaneous and unconscious sensuality.[15] Unfortunately, after the insertion "as it seemed to him," there is a blurring of the point of view of narrator and of René; thus, the description of Hester as being frighteningly "obscene" appears to come from both René's consciousness *and* from that of the omniscient narrator. The combination of the use of the words "obscene" and "fornicate"[16] conveys both a Biblical sense of sex as sin (revealing René's sexual paranoia in all its atavism), but also continues the blurring of point of view, making it difficult for the reader to decide *by whom* these judgements of Hester are being made. In short, we are left wondering whether the image of woman as an obscene object of fornication is being established as an absolute concept here, or whether this concept is merely being projected as a figment of René's paranoid imagination.[17] Certainly, we may assume that the lack of clarity in this regard is, *per se*, an indication of some ambivalence on the part of the writer. It is this ambivalence[18] which marks Lewis's treatment of the female principle as it is depicted on all levels of life; also, it is this ambivalence which produces, in Lewis's work, what we can define as *the sexual tragicomedy*.

Sex As The Inhuman Component

He always forgot that Hester was a human being, because she was so terribly much the Woman.

(Self Condemned, 147)

Self Condemned is the story of René and Hester, of their experience of the immigrant situation during wartime, their growing isolation on all levels, and their decline into total emotional, psychic, and finally even physical destruction. Theirs is a story of the process of intellectual, financial, social, economic, and, eventually, spiritual decadence. René resigns an illustrious professorship in an English university in a fit of hubris, which passes as an act of protest against what he considers the misuse and abuse to which he feels the academic world has subjected history. René has his own view of history, the publication of which, under the title The Secret History of World War II,[19] has won him some literary fame. He is a survivor from another era, from an ordered society for which he, and his coterie of admirers (like Rotter Parkinson, whom he fondly patronizes)[20] are hopelessly nostalgic:

> This was 1939, the last year, or as good as, in which such a life as this one was to be lived. Parkinson was the last of a species. Here he was in a large room, which was a private, a functional library. Such a literary workshop belonged to the ages of individualism. Its three or four thousand volumes were all book-plated Parkinson. It was really a fragment of paradise where one of our species lived embedded in his books, decently fed, moderately taxed, snug and unmolested.[21]

René and his friend Rotter are both aware of the immense fluctuations in the society around them, and fear the increasing impingement of a devastatingly new political era upon their once comfortable, smugly self-contained, intellectual worlds:

> Both of them knew that this was the last year of an epoch, and that such men as themselves would never exist on earth again, unless there were, after thousands of millennia, a return to the same point in a cosmic cycle. They knew that as far as that quiet, intelligent, unmolested elect life was concerned, they were both condemned to death: that the chronological future was, in fact, a future life, about which they both felt very dubious. They might survive as phantoms in a future England: or they might learn to live in some other way. It was with gravity that these friends sat talking, upon the brink of a chasm, in comfortable armchairs, but not with pathos. Once the fatality is recognized pathos is a disagreeable vulgarity. Even the atmosphere appeared to be thinning out. Parkinson and his visitor did not resort to words, merely for words' sake.[22]

As proven in the polemical works, The Mysterious Mr. Bull,[23] Paleface,[24] and America, I Presume,[25] Lewis was well aware of the process of political change which marked the decline of England as a world power. However, in the above-quoted passages, defining the political sensibilities of René and Rotter, Lewis also defines the effect on the individual life and sensibility of vast and swift political reversals -- a form of shock akin to that presently experienced by many in Europe and North America in the face of the new reality of Arab power realized through oil. Thus, René's and Rotter's sensibilities encompass a pre-war nostalgia for a period when it was still possible to buy England wealth and status from the resources of those far wealthier, but less industrial, countries considering themselves honoured with the name "Commonwealth." Encompassed here also is the nostalgia for an era when the black and brown flood[26] from that very "Commonwealth" had not yet left its mark upon the face-scape of England, as it would upon the world. It is in context of all of this that René's view of politics, history, life, and the future, as well as his abandonment of his professorship and of his country,[27] must all be seen.

René's action, in deciding to quit his professorship, and in actually doing so, is one of hubris, and reveals an amoral callousness, where his wife Hester is concerned. Hester, who does not share René's view of history, has the most to lose by his decision -- and, eventually, she is the one who does in fact lose the most (namely, her life), as an indirect result of his decision. Yet, she is the last person to be told of this completely unilateral decision, which is presented to her as a fait accompli. Hester's irrelevance to René, and the fact that he does not care at all how she reacts to this decision which he so arrogantly makes, ignoring the fact that it must change both their lives, are revealed in his visit to his mother and sister Mary, where he tells them of his plans:

> The two women looked at one another. Then Mary spoke.
> "What does Hester think about it?"
> "She knows nothing. I have told her nothing, so far."
> There was a sudden relaxation. Mary smiled as she said,
> "Your wife is in ignorance. Was it your idea to leave Hester out of your calculations?"
> René laughed very softly, his ho-ho laugh. "Hardly that," he told her. "One cannot leave a wife out of one's calculations."
> The mother smiled, and as she did so the furrows and bony accents of her face arranged themselves almost with a click in what was a miniature of his own characteristic mask.
> "Les femmes, ça se trouve quelquepart, n'est-ce pas, avec les valises et les parapluies."
> René ho-ho-ho'ed placidly. "Mais écoute, ma femme à moi n'est pas si commode."[28] (The italics are mine.)

René's arrogant rationalization of the very one-sided nature of his decision-making and subsequent action is as follows:

> "Just as it would be impossible to write Paradise Lost or Hamlet, collectively, so it is impossible to plan some major change in the individual life, collectively."[29]

What René refuses to admit (such is his complete lack of respect for Hester's individuality, or for her humanity), is the fact that the decision he has made is *not* a decision which concerns what he so blithely terms "the individual life," but concerns two lives which are bound up together -- his life *and* Hester's. (Of course, it is very probable that René does not consider Hester an *individual*; thus, if he himself is the only *individual*, then his unilateral decision will seem justified in the face of his boundless egotism.) Thus, of himself, René claims: ". . . I am a hero *malgré moi*."[30]

However, it is *because of* himself, and *not* in spite of himself, that there is nothing heroic, but rather a wealth of cruelty, in the manner in which René breaks his news to Hester:

> He pushed his correspondence away. "Hester. Apropos."
>
> "Yes, René." She had sunk back in her chair and stared at him apprehensively.
>
> "Yes, very much, I am afraid, apropos. There is something I have to talk to you about, and this seems a good moment. I have just sent in my resignation to the University. I had not obtained special leave of absence. I fear that I deceived you; I said that in order to delay giving you the news of my resignation. There is going to be another of these crazy and extremely wicked wars. As I no longer have my job, I propose to go to Canada. That, in the crudest outline, is what had to be imparted."
>
> He fastened a hard stare upon her, as though he had dropped something into Essie and were waiting to see it emerge. But at the moment she appeared incapable of any reaction at all. Her face had gone a little grey, her eyes still stared, but very blankly, even a shade piteously. *Among other things she had the sensation of having been unmasked, or (the same thing) seen through*. As Essie did not possess a very tough core, she was unprepared and a little abashed. And he went on staring at her so coldly that her uppermost impulse was to cry. But she did not do so. Instead she said, "I knew that something was the matter. I saw you were . . . I saw you were trying very hard to hide something." To see her pathetically clinging, even at this juncture, to what she regarded as her superior insight, in her capacity of female of the species, faintly amused her husband. He smiled, almost *contemptuously*.
>
> "Your penetration is admittedly extraordinary. But there was no Gunpowder Plot. I just thought it better to wait a little until things were settled."
>
> "*It did not occur to you to consult me*?"
>
> "*No. Nothing would have been gained*. What was involved could only have been settled by myself, not in discussion with others. Talking would only have blurred the issue."[31] (The italics are mine.)

This passage reveals not only René's complete arrogance, but also the process of moral and emotional brow-beating, or bullying which is his way of imposing his will upon Hester. It also reveals the extent to which he ignores Hester's commitment to him, and also his commitment to her, and the nature of these respective commitments.[32] In fact, René probably would deny any real commitment on his part to his wife. Yet, it must be clear to the reader that René desperately needs Hester, this "image of his lubricity"[33] for use as a scapegoat, through whom he can absolve himself of guilt for the expression of that very sexuality which he finds so unacceptable in himself. This point is further reinforced by consideration of the following passage:

> As ever, like an ill-conceived figure on the reverse side of a splendidly designed coin, was the unfortunate Hester. It would be a pity to exaggerate this, for it was nothing more than an irritable consciousness at times presenting itself, as of something amiss, but never strong enough to spoil the sensation experienced in his more flamboyant moments. But there was after all Hester to be counted in, *as part of any picture in which le roi René was starring*.
>
> Just in a flash, as he swept across the shadowy hall, he saw the figure at his heels: the hips were placed too low and gave her gait a sexish drag, her neck was too long, which acted as a sort of pole to carry Big Eyes aloft.
>
> Mary's face, Mary's gait did not advertise . . . oh, the horror of our lot. But *he* was goatish, he knew that: *and all Hester was -- was the Sandwich woman of his Achilles' heel: with some women a man must feel like a dog with a chicken tied around his neck*. But he switched off the tell-tale image, as one switches off the radio when it gets too bad, and thrust his head a fraction higher and quickened his quick dancing step.[34] (The italics are mine.)

Judging from René's very derogatory description of his wife (especially at that point which I have myself stressed, as noted by my italics), the bizarrely negative word ("goatish")[35] with which he refers to his own sexuality, and the condemnatory manner in which he so gratuitously compares his wife with his sister,[36] we may draw some basic conclusions about René's total inability to comfortably face the reality of his own sexuality, and any reflection or proof thereof. (The wider implications of René's negative -- and sexually charged -- comparison of his wife and sister will be investigated in an upcoming section of this chapter; at this point, it is sufficient to view this comparison as part of the proof of René's maladjustment to the reality of his own sexuality.)

In the last-quoted passage, as in the passage from pages 147 to 148 of the text, previously referred to, Lewis makes it obvious that René's rejection of Hester is only a symptom of, and part of, his rejection of himself, and of that very important part of that self -- namely, his sexuality. He cannot cope with the expressions of Hester's sensuality or sexuality, because he cannot cope with the reality of his own sexuality. (The schizophrenic separation which René arbitrarily imposes between the sexual side of his humanity, and the other components of his humanity completely alienates sensuality from his personality. Thus, René may play the beast with two backs for what Lewis sceptically calls "the nightly tête-à-tête between the sheets,"[37] but he undoubtedly must do so without the dimension of flair and grace which the capacity for sensuality would add.) It is this sexual maladjustment which is basic to his rejection of even the possibility of any real commitment to the relationship with his wife, and to his patent disrespect of, and, indeed, hatred of, her. Also basic to this attitude toward Hester and the love she vainly offers him is the inner imbalance indicated by his schizophrenic insistence on a separation of his mental and physical life, his psychic and sexual life, and his intellectual and emotional life. This attempt at separation of these human components is symbolized in René's erection of an artificial wall, in the apartment to which the couple is confined in Canada:

> It was René's habit to place an upended suitcase upon a high chair and drape it with a blanket. He stood this between his wife and himself, so blotting her out while he wrote or read. He could still see, over the crest of this stockade, a movement of soft ash-gold English hair, among which moved sometimes a scratching crimson fingernail.[38]

This careful separation of himself from her, totally without regard for the sensibilities of his wife, is the means by which René goads Hester into increasing psychic isolation -- an isolation which eventually culminates in the absolute psychic singularity of suicide.[39]

The method by which René practices his mental schizophrenia is described by Lewis as follows:

> He shook off what was mental as soon as he was done with it and passed over into the animal playground of the mind -- the sphere in which most people of course pass all their time. He was half-brother to Everyman.[40]

Having achieved this separation of mind and body, he relegates Hester, and all his interaction with her, strictly to the realm of the body. (The psychic implications of this relegation for Hester are left to the reader's imagination. The final effects of it are clear in terms of action -- namely, her suicide.) By this rigid separation of the constituents of his humanity, and by the arrogant stereotyping of the roles which these play in relation to one another,[41] René defines, on an a priori basis, the limits of his interaction with Hester to the purely physical plane, thus inadvertently laying stress on only the sexual side of their interaction -- an aspect which he greatly fears as a weakness in himself, and therefore scorns in his companion. It is not surprising, therefore, that René regards their mutual expression of sexual need as "the *absurd*."[42] Obviously, he must dismiss this component of his humanity as being unworthy of serious consideration or understanding (that is, "*absurd*") because he is quite unable to see this appetite in its natural context, or to accept the implications of his own animality. Thus, René's and Hester's sexual contact is described as follows:

> He took one step forward, all that was needed for complete contact, and placed both his arms around her. She turned, of course, the big silly mouth away. But very soon the mutual warmth and marital pressures converted her from an indignant icicle into a mass of melting flesh. A similar transformation occurred in the masterful analyst. This was not at all, at the conference in the neighbouring flat, as it had been planned to proceed. *Eros was a factor he always left out of his calculations* and when he first remarked that the above pressures were resulting in the same warmth on his side as he had intended them to induce on hers, *he was traversed by what almost amounted to a shudder. The absurd was happening. He was unable to escape from the absurd; that absurd which was for him an analogous enormity to l'infâme. It was with mortification* that he arrived a quarter of an hour late at the restaurant where he was meeting for lunch an ex-colleague, a man whose friendship he greatly prized.[43]
> (The italics are mine.)

Clearly, the self-induced gap in René's sensibility leaves him in a very invidious position as regards any emotional demand which may be made upon him. Thus, he responds with shuddering mortification to the reality of his own psycho-sexuality, as manifest in his own sexual desire. Thus, also, he must dismiss as "absurd" whatever else challenges his pat theoretical view of life. So, while he cannot grapple adequately with the challenge issued to this view of life, and mode of sensibility, by Hester's sensuality (mirroring his own, as this does), he is nonetheless vulnerable to the challenge she represents: his response to the psycho-sexual conflict which she catalyzes within him is one of psychic carnage. Two of René's favorite methods of dealing with Hester are intellectual bullying[44] and psychic isolation. Part of his isolatory tactics are his recourse to his work-room across the landing in the house which they share in England,[45] paralleled by his partitioning of the Canadian apartment by the building of a "stockade" made from an "upended suitcase."[46] (It is fitting that Lewis should here employ this military metaphor to describe René's activities, in that René is actually involved in a dire psychological battle against Hester. He wins the dubious prize of complete emotional impotence and sterility[47] by resorting to psychic carnage, which he wreaks on her. For to René, this woman, who is unwise enough to offer him tenderness, loyalty, sensuality and companionship is The Enemy, and she is dealt with as such.)

In fact, any contact which threatens René's chosen mode of emotional sterility is a source of pain and shock to him; it is accurate to say that any meaningful emotional contact traumatizes him, literally shaking the bases of the psychic insulation he has so wilfully chosen. Lewis shows his parting from his favorite sister, Helen, as an experience of this sort:

> This parting had been so unexpectedly painful. He had had no anticipation of anything unusual, owing to his careful insulation from the centre of emotional awareness. As he had explained to his sister, *he was able to fasten himself down to the unemotional daily routine: but suddenly, without any warning, floodgates of realization would fly open. The insulation would break down*. In order not to be *at the mercy of his emotions, he had been obliged to effect a division of his personality into two parts*: he had created a kind of artificial "unconscious" of his own, and thus locked away all acuity of realization. . . . *His callous self was so well insulated from the compartment of the imagination that he was able to pass as a somewhat unemotional man*. On the other, he *did*, as in the present case, experience a certain number of violent surprises.

> So he sat almost rigid in his corner; for the "floodgates" in question had not yet shut-to. On the other hand, in the past forty-eight hours his nervous system had undergone quite sufficient strain, and he wished to return to the callous norm as quickly as possible. But this could not be instantaneous -- his mental machinery was not so stream-lined as all that: so for a short while the glare of awareness was still present.[48] (The italics are mine.)

The importance of the fact that it is vis-à-vis his beloved sister, rather than his hated wife, that René reveals so clearly his own vulnerability will not be lost on the reader. The implications of this fact will be explored elsewhere.[49]

René's admission of his own need for Hester only surfaces in the most dire period of their stay in "The Room" in Canada, when poverty, social isolation and desperation bind them in what Lewis calls a "passionate solidarity."[50] One may well wonder why it is that René's admission of his own need for Hester -- as revealed in the following quotation -- is only conceded in times of immense pecuniary hardship, as if the value of the relationship were a kind of substitute or emergency currency which he had been embarrassed to recognize or utilize in more solvent times. His moment of insight with regard to Hester is described in the following conversation:

> "We are great friends, aren't we, René, as well as lovers?" she said softly.
>
> René was thinking of the work he had to do after tea: he did not take this in for a few moments: they were not accustomed to say things of that kind to one another. But then he turned squarely towards her, reached over and planted his hand on hers.
>
> "The greatest pals in the world, Ess. I don't believe there ever have been such pals."
>
> "I don't believe there have been either, René." He had taken his hand away and passed it through his hair, and frowned, as if confronted with some difficult problem. He stared at her intently. She became self-conscious at this scrutiny; she felt like some wild animal not accustomed to be looked at. We take our being for granted, our physical presence comes to enjoy the anonymity of furniture. What was he searching for, what information that he did not possess already?

> "I see, I see," he almost hissed, "*a stranger who has become a sister.*" *And it flashed through his mind how his belief in blood, in the Family, had taken him, in the crisis of his life, to a lot of strangers beginning with his mother*.
>
> *There was only Helen, and that was not because she was a sister. But here, all the time, was the person he should have gone to.* "Hardship! I am beginning to love hardship. It sharpens the sight. When I look, I see. I see what a grand woman you are. I used to think that you were scheming and frivolous -- I am afraid that you must have seen that I thought that."
>
> "I sometimes feared you thought that," she agreed.[51]
> (The italics are mine.)

The scene of which the above conversation was a part ends in the following way:

> So the appeal she had proposed to make must be indefinitely postponed; she left her chair, and putting her arms around his neck kissed him very tenderly. "My darling, we have been hammered together as you say by a very ugly fate, but we would have been together without that. You attribute too much to fate. But there is this, my darling, that I would do anything you asked me to do, and go wherever you wished. I did not know that I would do that once. *But I know now*."
>
> "What a grand woman you are. And this tête-à-tête of over three years has made us one person, Ess. I treated you awfully badly."
>
> René was so moved that tears flooded his eyes, as he held her as well as he could. She had intended to say that she would, as she had said, literally go anywhere, although secretly she would pray that it might be a less hideous spot -- she had intended at least to put in this mild reminder; but instead she found that she was crying too, *and they remained for a long time clasped together in something like a religious embrace*.[52] (The italics are mine.)

Indeed, as the above indicates, there is more than enough scope for the spiritual dimension in the relationship with Hester; and, in fact, René is well aware of the reality of this aspect of the relationship, as he is not beyond taking advantage of it as a source of emotional reinforcement in hard times. In the light of these facts, his inability to admit to his own psycho-sexual needs -- as fulfilled by the relationship with Hester, and his concomitant need for her -- all too cruelly defines that relationship as a kind of dirty act of prostitution in which he sees himself indulging against his better judgement. Thus, he makes of Hester a kind of unpaid whore, who satisfies the libidinous urges he abhors in himself, but cannot resist. His trauma of guilt and responsibility is complicated by the inability to see sex as the component of all human interaction, but not the exclusive motif,[53] and by the incipient intuition that Hester is more angel than whore, more friend than siren.[54] Ironically, therefore, his real dilemma is rooted in the fact that, despite -- or, perhaps, because of -- his petrified consciousness, and atrophied psycho-sexuality, he cannot ignore her sex:

> He always forgot that Hester was a human being, because she was so terribly much the Woman.[55]

Footnotes

[1] Consult Chapter I of Kate Millett's Sexual Politics, for an analysis of the Bible as a form of sexist socio-cultural mythology. One should note, however, that the male position in today's world is equally "relentless," as proven by Lewis in his portrait of the "self-condemned" René.

[2] See E. de Rham, The Love Fraud, 13-88.

[3] Insufficient stress has been placed, I feel, in all discussions of the pros and cons of motherhood and its personal and social ramifications, on the necessity for safe, effective contraction which is physically, psychologically, and aesthetically acceptable. Such contraception would liberate female sexuality to a great extent, in that it would offer them more options for expressing both their sensuality and their fertility, as vital and natural facts of life. (The importance of this aspect has been by-passed in favour of the debate about abortions, perhaps.)

[4] This is the fate of April (The Vulgar Streak), Mary (The Red Priest), and Bertha (Tarr), and Tets ("The War Baby"); however, as we shall see, their fate is no worse than that of those women who do not become pregnant -- for example, Hester (Self Condemned), or Mademoiselle Péronnette ("Beau Séjour").

[5] See M. Blaxall and B. Reagan, eds., Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation, J. Huber, ed., Changing Women in a Changing Society, and S. Robotham, Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It.

[6] Cf. A. Camus's The Outsider, where the protagonist's mother took on a "fiancé" in the "Home for Aged Persons" where she spends her last days, see text, 22-23, and 120; also S. de Beauvoir, The Coming of Age, 846-848.

[7] Cf. Chapter V of this thesis, and the view it offers of Lewis's analysis of female psycho-sexual developmental phases.

[8] Lewis, The Wild Body, 90.

[9] Ibid., 105-106.

[10] Ibid., 78.

[11] Ibid., 90-91.

[12] Self Condemned first appeared in 1954, published Methuen and Co., London. The first American edition was published by Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, in 1955.

[13] Compare the satanic Sammael's loathing for females in Lewis's The Human Age, Book III, Malign Fiesta, 369 and 377.

[14] Lewis, Self Condemned, 147-148.

[15] Cf. the portrait of natural sensuality represented by the figure of Lily in Lewis's Snooty Baronet.

[16] The use of the word "fornicate" in regard to marital sex surely conveys sexual rigidity and hysteria.

[17] Cf. William James, The Principles of Psychology, Vol. I, 224-290, on "the stream of consciousness" technique of writing.

[18] This ambivalence is explored elsewhere as one of the important elements in Lewis's attitude toward women in his writings.

[19] Self Condemned, 82-98. We may see this section of the novel -- Rotter's apologia for René's book -- as Lewis's extrapolation of his own view of history.

[20] Self Condemned, 98.

[21] Ibid., 76.

[22] Ibid., 78-79.

[23] Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 215-287.

[24] Lewis, Paleface, 252-257, 124-127.

[25] Lewis, America, I Presume, 223-228. Compare this section with Lewis, America and Cosmic Man, 172-181.

[26] Lewis, Paleface, 273-286.

[27] Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile, 9-13, and 91.

[28] Lewis, Self Condemned, 19.

[29] Ibid., 22.

[30] Ibid., 23.

[31] Self Condemned, 35-36. Note the use of the mask image, and the detailed analysis of the power of the language of the eye. For references to Hester's eyes, see text 41, 48, 197-8 and 371.

[32] With regard to Hester's position as a mere addendum to René's reality, compare the analyses of the positions of April and Maddie (The Vulgar Streak) in Chapter II of this thesis.

[33] Ibid., 148. For further explication of the bases of René's scapegoating and browbeating of Hester, see Roszak, Masculine/Feminine, Readings in Sexual Mythology, 76-86.

[34] Self Condemned, 48.

[35] Compare René's use of the term "goatish" with his use of the term "fornicate" with reference to sex with his wife (Self Condemned, 148). Both words have similarly negative implications and indicate an internalization of highly negative views of sexuality.

[36] Compare our analysis of the relationship between Vincent and Maddie in The Vulgar Streak, in Chapter II of this thesis. See also Self Condemned, 144.

[37] Cf. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 226-7, and Self Condemned, 31.

[38] Self Condemned, 169. Note Lewis's use of sensuous detail in describing Hester.

[39] Eventually, Hester throws herself under a truck. It is painfully ironic that Hester's choice of death is as active as her self-destructive emotional style in the relationship with René has been passive. (See text, 370-371.)

[40] Ibid., 121. This passage embodies a certain Lewisian romanticism -- by his inner dissection of himself, René becomes even more callous, more of a sub-human than the mythical, much-maligned, Everyman.

[41] Roszak, Masculine/Feminine -- Readings in Sexual Mythology, 87-104.

[42] Self Condemned, 44. (The italics are mine.)

[43] Self Condemned, 44.

[44] For details on the process and uses of intellectual domination of women by men, see G. Myrdal's Appendix 5, "A Parallel to the Negro Problem," in An American Dilemma (New York: Harper, 1944), 1073-1078. Compare Myrdal's essay with Paula Stern's essay, "The Womanly Image: Character Assassination through the Ages," in Adams and Briscoe, eds., Up Against the Wall, Mother . . ., 49-56.

[45] Self Condemned, 40.

[46] Ibid., 169.

[47] This emotional sterility is summed up in the final sentence of the novel, Self Condemned, 407:

". . . and the Faculty had no idea that it was a glacial shell of a man who had come to live among them, mainly because they were themselves unfilled with anything more than a little academic stuffing."

[48] Self Condemned, 140-141.

[49] See Chapter II, Sections II and III, of this thesis, with reference to the strong filial bond between Vincent and Maddie, of The Vulgar Streak.

[50] Self Condemned, 310.

[51] Ibid., 239.

[52] Ibid., 239.

[53] See Roszak, op. cit., 87-104.

[54] Compare A. Pietropinto and J. Simenauer, eds., in Beyond the Male Myth, on what is termed the "Prostitute/Madonna complex."

[55] Self Condemned, 147. (Similarly, because René cannot easily see Hester as a person, he cannot see her suicide as an expression of intolerable pain -- indeed, he cannot dare to. Instead, he has to interpret her suicide egocentrically and defensively, as an act of revenge against himself. (Compare text, 372-378 and 389-395.)

Section III: The Tragicomedy of Sex

The Tank and The Tadpole -- A View of Female Sexuality

> But Junior, the uncompromising figure speaking not of Love but of the toad-life at the bottom of the tank, rose before his eyes. . . .
>
> John was assailed with an idea which was remarkably unscientific. He wondered whether all women had not a little monster like Junior, concealed somewhere among their intestines, all the time? When they got married, they . . .
>
> ("Junior," in Unlucky for Pringle, 115-116)

There is a certain type of sexual vision which insists on the necessity for a dichotomy between the role of mother and of Venus,[1] between sexuality[2] and fertility.[3] Alien to such an attitude is the concept[4] that sexuality covers the total human cycle from birth, through childhood experimentation and awakening,[5] through childbirth,[6] to death. This type of vision will usually embody a horror of the reproductive process, of the acceptance of the female as a menstruating creature, and a variety of unresolved or ambivalent attitudes to sex *per se*. This ambivalence and sexual *underdevelopment*, so to speak, are part of the theme of the story entitled "Junior" (contained in the Vision press edition of *Unlucky for Pringle*) from which the following quotation is taken, representing, as we feel it does, this very ambivalence, or sexual immaturity.

> "Mouseums" was a bed-name. He seemed to carry his bed about on his back! In the working-class he would not have written "Mouseums." Perdita would have been all that was necessary. But, as it was, Mouseums took the bed into the village post office. As to Mouseums herself, now that she had presented her visiting card, it was, he knew, the end of *irresponsible lust*. There would be no more Mouseuming. No. He would always recognize what a splendid *Esquire*-like "piece of goods" she was, but a real live mouse had sprung out of the mousehole. And when would Mouseums have another babe? He could not ever see himself being carefree again. She had chalked herself up ONE (in full

> working order, a fat hen in the form of Venus) with uproarious publicity.
>
> How could he explain to Mouseums that she was not quite Mouseums any more?[7]

This, then, is the response of the comfortably middle-class male -- "the violently disturbed John Leslie,"[8] to the birth of his firstborn, his son and heir. His response is one which typifies the sort of sexual underdevelopment which is a theme of this story and of many others written by Lewis; importantly, Lewis places and defines this attitude as one of imbalance and inadequacy or paranoia by the alternating use of irony,[9] the "stream of consciousness" technique (as in the above-quoted passage where John bemoans his imagined loss of erotic bliss), and by the use of the technique of omniscient narration (since Lewis himself describes the protagonist as "the violently disturbed John Leslie"[10]). Irony, and the discrepancy between the individual's consciousness and the reality as perceived by the disinterested reader, are basic to the method by which Lewis articulates the full extent of John's paranoia, as in the following extract:

> John was assailed with an idea which was remarkably unscientific. He wondered whether all women had not a little monster like Junior, concealed somewhere among their intestines, all the time? When they got married, they . . . He examined the young lady, who offered herself for immediate reference. Yes; -- she held herself forward, almost crouching, which would be the position in which it would be natural for a woman, under such circumstances, to hold herself. Hers was certainly a secretive look . . . as though she had concealed on her person a time-bomb. Everything bore out this absurdly unscientific theory of his. He felt like asking her why she crouched in the way she did. Was she the possessor of an infernal machine?
>
> Luckily they stopped at a station, and this graceful young lady left the carriage -- casting a sideways look of the most authentic terror at John, and John shrinking back from her. He saw her mount into the neighbouring carriage.[11]

Not unconnected with a paranoia on the subject of reproduction (especially when this is seen as a uniquely female function) is the attitude, also depicted in Lewis's short stories collected in the Pringle text, which views women as consumers, predators, or cannibals, slyly conquering and ensnaring men through a quintessentially symbiotic process -- reproduction. This is only another aspect of that psycho-sexual immaturity or underdevelopment which may be seen as one of the recurring themes in this collection of Lewis's short stories. (Sex and reproduction as consumption and symbiosis -- but seen, conversely, from the point of view of the female predator -- have been given recent expression in the novel Surfacing, by Margaret Atwood.[12]) This theme, depicted from the position of the paranoid and sexually immature male, who sees the pregnant woman -- the reproductive animal -- as a sly predator, is as basic to the story "The War Baby" as it is to "Junior"; it represents a link of thematic continuity which unifies the collection from which these stories are taken, transforming them into an artistic unity, which examines, on various levels, the nature and development of male-female sexuality. Thus Lutitia, who is impregnated by the male protagonist of "The War Baby," is described as follows:

> But Tets was enthroned; for although one of several, she was softly sculpting a Totem, whereas others had not had that art -- or craft.[13]
> (The italics are mine.)

It is unnecessary to stress how similar in theme to the above passage is the following passage, from "Junior," where one man's horror at the reproductive process is revealed in terms of grotesque fantasy:

> In his imagination, he reduced the entire company to creatures of this kind. A small dark wriggling monster. Then he knew that there was a piscine phase of the foetus -- and he could visualize them all, at that stage of life; collected in a tank. As a little fish, he could see himself glassily eyeing Perdita. The sharp-sighted are apt to be granted this fundamental vision of the human, in the moments immediately succeeding procreation -- the female adoration of the just-born abortion, striking a spark. So reflected the violently disturbed John Leslie.[14]

Clearly, at this level of male psycho-sexual underdevelopment, the capacity for childbirth and the capacity for sexual love are viewed as incompatible, and a real conflict is perceived between sex, sexuality and procreation. Thus, the unready father's response to his wife's loving and conciliatory telegram is as follows:

> It was dark when he returned to the cottage. A telegram lay just inside the door. "Don't blame you. Wasn't it awful? Darling, wish I were with you. All love. Mouseums." This produced a very unwelcome sensation. His sex awoke, as it was intended to. He almost sped back to Blundon, to Mouseums. But, at the critical moment, he snarled, "Not while Junior is there."[15]

On examination of these passages, it seems clear that, not only is John Leslie convinced that there is a basic contradiction between sex and procreation, and that the latter must negate and spoil the former, but also, that he is unable, like René Harding (the protagonist of Self Condemned), and Tarr (the male protagonist of Tarr) or unwilling to cope with his own sexual responses, even, or perhaps, especially, when these responses arise spontaneously. This fear of sexual or psycho-sexual spontaneity, and of sexuality as a real and independent aspect of human life, is one mark of the sexual tragicomedy as depicted throughout Lewis's work -- a tragicomedy which is no joke, so to speak, but which, in keeping with Lewis's definition of laughter as a form of dynamic vision, assumes the force of tragic revelation.[16] In fact, the inability to cope with, accept, and enjoy all aspects of the human psycho-sexual experience can usually be seen in Lewis's work, as being at the heart of a tragic maladjustment to the reality of the individual's own status as a human being -- or just as a particular type of animal/machine. Sexual nausea is expressed repeatedly in Lewis's work -- so often, in fact, that J.D. Allen[17] has produced intricate conundrums of psycho-sexual analysis which have in no way illuminated Lewis's work, though they may further intrigue the biographer -- (Allen's biographer, not Lewis's). It seems sufficient to note that the theme of sexual nausea in Lewis's work is a recurrent one, leading, ultimately, to the creation of a variety of artistically unified thoughts on, and explorations of, human awareness. This theme is not isolated, but is linked to the exposition of a revulsion from, and at, the whole concept of the reproductive process.[18] Thus, the sexual nausea cannot be separated from a horror at woman as consumer/devourer/producer[19] in sex, or as integral part of the continuing cycle of reproduction. Obviously, the horror of woman as a reproductive animal is linked with the horror of sex as being intricately and inextricably related to the complex possibility of human and animal reproduction. Obviously, the question latent here is: can the individual who experiences such psycho-sexually-based horror of reproduction and all its manifestations (of which sex is one) really have come to terms with the reality of his own humanity, and the source of his own being? This question, and various answers to it, are explored in terms of the nuances of meaning which can be ascribed to major areas of Lewis's writing.

In context of the foregoing question, and what we are positing as the possible implications for an answer in Lewis's work, the following extract seems worth examination. This is a description of John Leslie's behaviour during his flight by train from his home, the scene of joyful receptions of his new-born son.

> So, his eye rested sternly upon the heavily-baited woman installed at the other side of the carriage, she with her back to the engine as he was facing it, with a professional ruthlessness. He was very well able to understand what lay at the top of the nylon; the warm and scented cave of the skirt held no mysteries for him. And from what he could gather by the behaviour of the heavily-eyelashed eyes, and from a sultry sigh which could only mean one thing, it must be that this young person, like Perdita, was prone to indulge herself, cheek to cheek and stomach to stomach, with her prey.
>
> But Junior, the uncompromising figure speaking not of Love but of the toad-life at the bottom of the tank, rose before his eyes.[20] (The italics are mine.)

In this passage, all the metaphors and adjectives used to describe John's fellow passenger conspire to create an image of hunting, and calculated predation. Clearly, if we view this young woman through John's eyes, we would see her as a scheming and ruthless huntress; we would also see that any woman, who, like Perdita (John's wife), enjoys her own sexuality, must be seen as a threat, and a predator, her mate being her victim. (Of Perdita, we are told:

> . . . Perdita had had quite a taste for the frivolous accessories of her business; in fact he got so much sport at home that he was not tempted to supplement that with what might offer abroad. Perdita was one of those women who was [sic] partial to her own man-bait.[21])

The opposite of this situation -- that is, a context in which it is the male, rather than the female, who is presented as the predator, is presented elsewhere in Lewis's writing -- for example, in the novel Snooty Baronet, or the short stories "The War Baby" and "Beau Séjour." Interestingly, however, in these latter examples, the perspective seems to have shifted: the incident no longer seems to be related through the eyes of a particular protagonist, but rather, from the perspective of the omniscient narrator. Thus, while we are given the "stream of consciousness" technique (showing the point of view of the created character) when female sexual predation is described or imagined, we are, conversely, treated to the more objective stance of the omniscient narrator when male predation is being described. To verify this point, it is necessary to compare the two previously-quoted passages (from the short story "Junior") with the following passages, from a similar form (the short story) and a different form (the novel):

> "Willie, do you love me a little bit?"
>
> What should he say? He loved her as much as he loved a luscious meadow full of sheep, or the side of a tall house illuminated by a sunset, or any pleasant sight or sound that he might meet. But that is not what women mean by "do you love me?" He understood that. They mean, "Do you think that perpetual intercourse with me for the rest of your life would be a nice thing?" That was hardly a question to put to a sentimental theorist of nobility, a dealer in hardness. Was the mink to inquire of the panther whether he would always kiss so nicely, while he was giving the mink a preliminary lick before devouring his prey?[22]

In this passage, the male is defined as predator by analogy, obviously. In the following passage, the male is predator, with the compliance of the female, who offers herself to be devoured in the act of sexual expression, which is depicted through the dance as a form of sensual interaction:

> The 'Blue Danube' rolled on; Carl poured appreciative oily light into Mademoiselle Péronnette's eyes, she redoubled her lascivious fluxions, until Carl, having exhausted all the superlatives of the language of the eyes, cut short their rhythmical advance and, becoming immobile in the middle of the room, clasped her in his arms, where she hung like a dying wasp, Carl devouring with much movement the lower part of her face, canted up with abandon.[23]

In the third passage under consideration for comparison, while, on the one hand, we are being given the description of what happens from the point of view of the first person narrator, we are, at the same time, afforded an interestingly shifting and integrated mixture of perspectives on the subject of sexual predation and expression: while the male is the obvious sexual antagonist, the strength of the monster image makes it clear that the woman is no passive victim of his sexual aggression. Because of the integrated nature of the sexual activity being described here, and the manner in which sexual aggressiveness is shown -- albeit imagistically -- as being *shared*, this is one of the most dramatically interesting, and humanly compelling, descriptions of sexual interaction to be found in Lewis's writing:

> "Come Valley!" I muttered cordially.
>
> She grappled with me at once, before the words were well out of my mouth, with the self-conscious gusto of a Chatterley-taught expert. But as I spoke I went to meet her -- as I started my mechanical leg giving out an ominous creak (I had omitted to oil it, like watches and clocks these things require lubrication). I seized her stiffly round the body. All of her still passably lissom person -- on the slight side -- gave. It was the human willow, more or less. It fled into the hard argument of my muscular pressures. Her waist broke off and vanished into me as I took her over *in waspish segments*, an upper and nether. The bosoms and head settled like a trio of hefty birds upon the upper slopes of my militant trunk: *a headless nautilus on the other hand settled upon my middle, and attacked my hams with its horrid tentacles -- I could feel the monster of the slimy submarine-bottoms grinding away beneath, headless and ravenous*.[24]
> (The italics are mine.)

Clearly, to view sexuality, or sex itself, as being merely a one-sided affair of predation is at least a distortion, or an indulgence in paranoia; it is just this type of distortion or paranoia which is deliberately and dramatically externalized and concomitantly explored by Lewis time and time again; additionally, it is a view which is contingent on the concept of the tragicomedy of sex which is inherent in his works. How much or how little Lewis himself (as opposed to his puppets and creations) was committed to, or involved with, this view is contingent on, and discernible only to a certain extent through, the various formal techniques of point-of-view used to articulate these attitudes. (In the previous paragraphs, we have indicated the shifts in point-of-view which seem to be utilized.) It seems clear, however, that an effort to reach conclusions regarding the question of Lewis's possible commitment to the attitudes expressed by, or embodied in, his characters, by processes of amateur or second-hand psychology is quite abortive, and irrelevant to the goals of literary criticism.[25]

The comedy of sex reaches the heights (or depths) of the absurd -- and, content accompanying form -- the heights of the paranoid, when John (the protagonist of the story "Junior") starts to wonder whether, after all, woman does not equal predator, equal devourer, equal monster:

> When he had reached this point in his domestic scrutiny his expression became so ferocious that the young lady was extremely alarmed. She considered the advisability of pulling the communication cord.
>
> John was assailed with an idea which was remarkably unscientific. He wondered whether all women had not a little monster like Junior, concealed somewhere among their intestines, all the time? When they got married, they . . . He examined the young lady, who offered herself for immediate reference. Yes; -- she held herself forward, almost crouching, which would be the position in which it would be natural for a woman, under such circumstances, to hold herself. Hers was certainly a secretive look . . . as though she had concealed on her person a time-bomb. Everything bore out this absurdly unscientific theory of his. He felt like asking her why she crouched in the way she did. Was she the possessor of an infernal machine?[26]

Here, John's distorted view of women reaches an almost psychotic degree, making him a real object of fear to his observer. In fact, John is shown as being now unable to look at a woman (another human being, *incidentally*) as anything other than a potential "tadpole" tank, a potential destroyer/procreator. This simple encounter seems to reveal a Lewisian message: because John has never seen women as fellow-humans, he cannot now see them as even merely human, since his view of them has become even further distorted by the trauma of his experience of procreation. (It is difficult to use the word "fatherhood" here, as John's attitude to his wife's pregnancy and delivery seems to indicate that he views this process as a plot, *autonomously* undertaken and executed by woman-as-predator.) Thus, it seems to be hinted by Lewis that John's post-partum paranoia is a result of, and a reflection of, a fragmented and fragmentatory view of maleness, femaleness, humanity and sexuality. This unbalanced view of sexuality has merely been catalyzed into an angry mini-psychosis by his experience of fatherhood. John is therefore not only in flight from the reality of his son,[27] Junior; he is, more importantly, in flight from *himself, and from his own reality as a sexual and reproductive creature*. In view of this claim, it is, at the very least, *ironic* that it is the smell of his wife's perfume (perfume being always an artificial sexual stimulant) which is the immediate catalyst of John's precipitate return home.[28]

Footnotes

[1] In this regard, compare the following: M. Andersen, ed., Mother Was Not A Person, 133-161; M. Atwood, Survival, 195-211; S. De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 456-497; M. Decter, The Liberated Woman and Other Americans, "Sex, My Daughter, and Me," 54-65; N. Friday, "My Mother/Myself," The Daughter's Search for Identity, 291-379; and A. Pietropinto and J. Simenauer, eds., for their analysis of the "Prostitute/Madonna Complex," in Beyond the Male Myth.

[2] In this regard, compare the following: M. Anderson, ed., Mother Was Not A Person, 163-169; B.B. Cassara, ed., American Women: The Changing Image: see Pearl S. Buck's essay entitled "Changing Relationships Between Men and Women," 3-10; S. Hite, The Hite Report; and K. Kellen, The Coming Age of Woman Power, "Woman Power and the Future of Sex," 116-166.

[3] In this regard compare the following: S. De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 456-497; A.S. Kraditor, ed., Up From The Pedestal: see H.S. Blatch's essay entitled "Voluntary Motherhood," 167-175; M. Nunes, and D. White, eds., The Lace Ghetto; E. Reed, Is Biology Woman's Destiny? and Problems of Women's Liberation; and E. Vilar, The Manipulated Man, "Children As Hostages," 117-127.

[4] This concept was articulated and explored by Professor Wilfred Watson, in seminar, at the University of Alberta, in 1972-73.

[5] S. Freud, The Sexual Enlightenment of Children, 47-183.

[6] M. Nunes, and D. White, eds., op. cit.

[7] Lewis, W., Unlucky for Pringle, 112. (The italics are mine.) Compare the phrase "a splendid Esquire-like 'piece of goods'" with Self Condemned, 148, where a similar comparison is used. Compare also Rene's relief that Hester had never had a child, Self Condemned, 30-31.

[8] Lewis, W., Unlucky for Pringle, 110.

[9] In this regard, compare the following: M. Hodgart, Satire, 129-131; A. Pollard, Satire, 23-28; D. Worcester, The Art of Satire, 71-144.

[10] See Lewis's Satire and Fiction, that the "stream of consciousness" technique was most appropriate when used with reference to children, the very old or animals.

[11] Unlucky for Pringle, 115-116.

[12] M. Atwood, Surfacing.

[13] Unlucky for Pringle, 106.

[14] Ibid., 110.

[15] Ibid., 114.

[16] The Wild Body, 245.

[17] J.D. Allen, Apollonian/Dionysian Conflict in the Works of Wyndham Lewis.

[18] Compare descriptions of the fate of the female sinners in the afterworld depicted in Lewis's The Human Age, Book Three, Malign Fiesta, 354-357, 369-373 and 378-379.

[19] See this inference vis-à-vis the sexual devouring which is seen as part of the natural order in the short story Cantleman's Spring Mate, in Unlucky for Pringle, 78.

[20] Lewis, Unlucky for Pringle, 115.

[21] Ibid., 115.

[22] Ibid., 101. (This passage has been quoted elsewhere, but is being utilized here once again as part of a different argument.)

[23] Lewis, The Wild Body, 92.

[24] Lewis, Snooty Baronet, 45. Compare the wasp image in this passage with a similar image in the story "Beau Séjour," from The Wild Body, 92.

[25] Cf. in particular J.D. Allen, The Apollonian-Dionysian Conflict in the Works of Wyndham Lewis.

[26] Unlucky for Pringle, 115-116. (This is a passage of crucial importance in the story "Junior," and in terms of our total argument in this chapter. Hence, it has been quoted more than once.)

[27] At this point, in the development of the story, it is irrelevant that John's wife later claims that the baby is not John's child. (This possibility, however, opens further dimensions of irony for the reader!)

[28] Unlucky for Pringle, 118-119.

Section IV: The Tragicomedy of Sex

Sex As Violent Tragicomedy -- A Note On "Brotcotnaz"

"Brotcotnaz"[1] is an important short story, symbolically and ironically combining major themes which we have examined in Lewis's work: namely, the themes of sex as violence, of psycho-sexual nausea and alienation, and the tragicomic aspects of sexuality. "Brotcotnaz" presents a disturbing vision of heterosexual interaction -- the vision of sexuality as violent tragicomedy. In this work, Lewis presents a picture of a distorted relationship between a man and a woman -- a relationship in which the tragicomedy arises from the grotesquerie of a violent power struggle, based on, and expressive of, sexual politics. This power struggle is conducted physically (as seen in Lewis's depiction of the male party's brutal use of physical violence), and metaphysically (as depicted in the female party's use of moral and emotional blackmail). In one sense, the story can be seen as a grim paradigm for much that Lewis has said or implied concerning violence and the tragicomic elements in sexual relationships. It also contains some core themes and issues which Lewis continually presents as being basic to relationships between the sexes. The value of the story may emerge as a result of an examination of these core themes.

One of the most important -- and frightening -- themes presented in the story "Brotcotnaz" is the concept of violence as being normative in heterosexual relationships. This concept is indirectly, but nonetheless unmistakably, implied by the action of the story. That action is simple enough: it deals with Brotcotnaz, a Breton fisherman/inn-keeper, who regularly and brutally beats up his wife, Julie. Contained in the collection of stories entitled The Wild Body, the story is told by the Lewisian persona, Kerr-Orr, who lends an ironic perspective to the total meaning of the action. Brotcotnaz is really a dilettante, who is poor, despite his aspirations, and who also represents the artist figure in the story. We can also infer that he is something of a ruthless charmer, a fortune-hunter. Lewis tells us:

> Brotcotnaz is at once a fisherman, débitant or saloon-keeper, and 'cultivator.' In spite of this trinity of activities, he is poor. To build their present home he dissipated what was then left of Julie's fortune, so I was told by the postman one evening on the cliff. When at length it stood complete, beneath the little red bluff hewn out for its reception, brightly whitewashed, with a bald slate roof, and steps leading up to the door, from the steep and rugged space in front of it, he celebrated its completion with an expressive house-warming. Now he has the third share in a fishing boat, and what trade comes his way as a saloon-keeper, but it is very little.[2]

In his depiction of the superficially charming Brotcotnaz and his unattractive wife, Julie, Lewis is undoubtedly defining or indicating the value traditionally placed on the different characteristics of good looks, "charm," and social grace, on the one hand, and on money on the other hand, as being assets which individuals bring to a relationship, as sources of power.[3] Of the wife, Julie, Lewis tells us:

> The distillations of the breton orchard have almost subdued the obstinate yellow of jaundice, and Julie's face is a dull claret. In many tiny strongholds of eruptive red the more recent colour has entrenched itself. Her hair is very dark, parted in the middle, and tightly brushed down upon her head. Her eyebrows are for ever raised. She could not depress them, I suppose, any more, if she wanted to. A sort of scaly rigor fixes the wrinkles of the forehead into a seriated field of what is scarcely flesh, with the result that if she pulled her eyebrows down, they would fly up again the moment she released the muscles. The flesh of the mouth is scarcely more alive: it is parched and pinched in, so that she seems always hiding a faint snicker by driving it primly into her mouth. Her eyes are black and moist, with the furtive intensity of a rat. They move circumspectly in this bloated shell. She displaces herself also more noiselessly

> *than the carefulest nun*, and her hands are generally decussated, drooping upon the ridge of her waist-line, as though fixed there with an emblematic nail, at about the level of her navel. Her stomach is, for her, a kind of exclusive personal 'calvary.' At its crest hang her two hands, with the orthodox decussation, an elaborate ten-fingered symbol.[4] (The italics are mine.)

We should not take this negative description of the woman, with its implications of anxiety, aridity, and crucifixion, as an indicator of a negative bias on Lewis's part. Rather, when juxtaposed with the following description of her light-hearted husband, it is an indication of the vulnerability in a traditional male-female relationship, of a female whose only source of bargaining power (in this case, money) has disappeared. In the light of this assertion, the following description of Brotcotnaz assumes doubly ironic implications:

> The dimensions of his eyes, and their oily suffusion with smiling-cream, or with some luminous jelly that seems still further to magnify them, are very remarkable. They are great tender mocking eyes that express the coquetry and contentment of animal fats. The sides of his massive forehead are often flushed, as happens with most men only in moments of embarrassment. Brotcotnaz is always embarrassed. But the flush with him, I think, is a constant affluence of blood to the neighbourhood of his eyes, and has something to do with their magnetic machinery. The tension caused in the surrounding vessels by this aesthetic concentration may account for it. What we call a sickly smile, the mouth remaining lightly drawn across the gums, with a slight painful contraction -- the set suffering grin of the timid -- seldom leaves his face.
>
> *The tread of this timid giant is softer than a nun's* -- the supple quick-giving at the knees at each step that I have described is the result no doubt of his fondness for the dance, in which he was so rapid, expert, and resourceful in his youth. When I first stayed with them, the year before, a man one day was playing a pipe on the cliff into the hollow of which the house is built. Brotcotnaz heard the music and drummed upon the table. Then, lightly springing up he danced in his tight-fitting black clothes a finicky hornpipe, in the middle of the débit. His red head was balanced in the air, face downwards, his arms went up alternately over his head, while he watched his feet like a dainty cat, placing them lightly and quickly here and there, with a ceremonial tenderness, and then snatching them away.[5] (The italics are mine.)

Unattractively aging, lacking her younger[6] husband's grace and superficial charm or flair, and now robbed of her financial advantage (which was no doubt the major asset which she was seen as having brought to this traditional marriage), Julie is indeed very vulnerable. This vulnerability is violently exploited by her husband, who regularly beats her up. This fact is widely known and accepted by the villagers, just as is Julie's "secret" dependence on alcohol. In short, Lewis is here indicating that two really abnormal aberrations, alcoholism and brutality, are accepted by society as normal in, and normative of, the traditional chauvinistic marriage.[7] This horrible fact is made clear in the following passage:

> Underneath the counter on the left hand of a person behind it was the bottle of eau-de-vie. When everyone else had gone to the river to wash clothes, or had collected in the neighbouring inn, she approached the bottle on tiptoe, poured herself out several glasses in succession, which she drank with little sighs. *Everybody knew this*. That was the first secret. I [Kerr-Orr] had ravished it, impetuously as described. Her second secret was the periodic beatings of Brotcotnaz. They were of very great severity. When I had occupied a room there, the crashing in the next apartment at night lasted sometimes for twenty minutes. The next day Julie was bandaged and could hardly limp downstairs. That was the erypsipelas. *Everyone knew this, as well: yet her secretiveness had to exercise itself upon these scandalously exposed objects*.[8] (The italics are mine.)

Brotcotnaz follows up these bouts of brutality with elaborate and hypocritical displays of tenderness towards his wife, who submits to this treatment also. Lewis implies that this farce of tenderness is part of a larger, deadly game in which this man and woman are involved -- it is a game, which, like the archetypal sado-masochistic relationship they re-enact, can only end in mutual, or unilateral destruction.[9] This is the grim reality which is at the base of this marriage, which Lewis presents in its disturbing "normalcy" and typicality:

> The morning after a beating -- Julie lying seriously battered upon their bed, or sitting rocking herself quietly in the débit, her head a turban of bandages, he noiselessly attends to her wants, enquires how she feels, and applies remedies. It is like a surgeon and a patient, an operation having just been successfully performed. He will walk fifteen miles to the nearest large town and back to get the necessary medicines. He is grave, and receives pleasantly your commiserations on her behalf, if you offer them. He has a delicate wife, that is the idea: she suffers from a chronic complaint. He addresses her on all occasions with a compassionate gentleness. *There is, however, something in the bearing of both that suggests restraint. They are resigned, but none the less they remember the cross they have to bear*. Julie will refer to his intemperance, casually, sometimes. She told me on one occasion, that, when first married, they had had a jay. This bird knew when Brotcotnaz was drunk. When he came in from a wake or 'Pardon,' and sat down at the débit table, the jay would hop out of its box, cross the table, and peck at his hands and fly in his face.
>
> The secret of this *smiling giant*, a year or two younger, I daresay, than his wife, *was probably that he intended to kill her. She had no more money. With his reputation as a wife-beater, he could do this without being molested*. When he went to a 'Pardon,' she on her side knew that he would try to kill her when he came back. That seemed to be the situation. If one night he did succeed in killing her, he would *sincerely* mourn her. At the fiançailles with his new bride he would see this one on the chair before him, his Julie, and, *still radiating tolerance and health, would shed a melancholy smiling tear*.[10] (The italics are mine.)

Through Kerr-Orr's ironic tone, Lewis points out the multiple contradictions of this situation: the woman participates in a fatal game at her own risk, and despite her own suffering, both physical and metaphysical; the game is really a mortal battle for *power* between male and female, and the loser is destroyed, either physically, emotionally, or on both levels; shockingly, society sanctions this type of relationship, giving the male power over the woman's body and her being, and offering her no reciprocal protection against his excesses; the female, with society's help, then co-operates in her own destruction, knowingly or unknowingly. (Of course, this pattern has been more than adequately documented and analyzed by feminist writers and sociologists.[11] Its entrenchment within the very fabric of social institutions like marriage, and in the very definition of the roles and rights of males and females makes Lewis's depiction of Julie's dependence on alcohol seem all too tragically understandable.)

The final irony of the story is provided by the development of the action. Julie is seriously injured in a freak accident with a cart; she has had an arm and a leg crushed by the cart, and there is a real possibility that the arm will have to be amputated.[12] Brotcotnaz's initial reaction to the news of the accident is one of jealousy. Here, Lewis is emphasizing one of the main themes presented in the story, namely the concept of physical brutality as normative between male and female, when the female's body is seen as being, in absolute terms, the possession or property of her husband or mate. Lewis reveals this concept, and its widespread male and social acceptance, in his description of Brotcotnaz's response to his realization of Julie's injury. The additional ironic implications of this injury are also made clear: by her seemingly fortuitous injury (notwithstanding the fact that it may involve the real truncation of her body), Julie is paradoxically saved from her husband's myriad assaults, and, in an ironically Pyrrhic victory, wins the war that has been going on between them, as Brotcotnaz will hardly maltreat a crippled or disabled person. Thus, Lewis shows us, the power struggle has been resolved by Chance, in favour of the woman, but only at a very high price. Such are the implications of the following quotations:

> The familiar image of her battered form as seen on a lendemain de Pardon must have arisen in his mind. He is assailed with a sudden incapacity to think of injuries in his wife's case except as caused by a human hand. He is solicited by the reflection that he himself had not been there. There was, in short, the effect, but not the cause.

> Whatever his ultimate intention as regards Julie, he is a 'jaloux'. *All his wild jealousy surges up. A cause, a rival cause, is incarnated in his excited brain*, and goes in an overbearing manner to claim its effect. In a second a man is born. He does not credit him, but he gets a foothold just outside of reason. He is a rival! -- another Brotcotnaz; all his imagination is sickened by this super-Brotcotnaz, as a woman who had been delivered of some hero, already of heroic dimensions, might naturally find herself. A moment of great weakness and lassitude seizes him. *He remains powerless at the thought of the aggressive actions of this hero*. His mind succumbs to torpor, it refuses to contemplate this figure.
>
> It was at this moment that some one must have told him the actual cause of the injuries. The vacuum of his mind, out of which all the machinery of habit had been momentarily emptied, filled up against with its accustomed furniture. *But after this moment of intense void the furniture did not quite resume its old positions, some of the pieces never returned, there remained a blankness and desolate novelty in the destiny of Brotcotnaz*.[13] (The italics are mine.)

In this passage, physical violence is seen, through Lewis's delineation of Brotcotnaz's response to his wife's injury, as being normative and natural behaviour of a male toward a female; thus, Brotcotnaz initially perceives Julie's injury as being essentially a product of contact with a man -- hence, his jealous reaction. Along with this intense experience of jealousy (which, Lewis shows us, exists *regardless of* his own brutal intentions towards his wife), Brotcotnaz must face the paralyzing shock of realizing that this woman's body is not really *his* sole and absolute possession after all; that body is as subject to chance as it was to his assaults. Lewis indicates that the recognition of this fact leaves Brotcotnaz incapacitated, some of the very underpinnings of his security removed. Julie, of course, takes advantage of this moment of psychic weakness on the part of her erstwhile tormentor, whom only brutal destiny has helped her to *outwit*.[14] Clearly, Lewis is indicating that, ironically enough, the balance of power between these two has been reversed in Julie's favour, by the very circumstance of her own near annihilation. Thus, Kerr-Orr tells us, concerning Julie's attitude:

> She returned to the table and sat down, lowering herself to the chair, and sticking out her bandaged foot. She took the drink I gave her, and raised it almost with fire to her lips. After the removal of her arm, and possibly a foot, I realized that she would be more difficult to get on with than formerly. The bottle of eau-de-vie would remain no doubt in full view, to hand, on the counter, and Brotcotnaz would be unable to lay a finger on her: in all likelihood she meant that arm to come off.
>
> I was not sorry for Nicholas; I regarded him as a changed man. Whatever the upshot of the accident as regards the threatened amputations, the disorder and emptiness that had declared itself in his mind would remain.[15]

Inevitably, this story raises the following questions: does Lewis imply that death,[16] literal or metaphysical self destruction,[17] or other forms of incomplete destruction of the self or the spirit,[18] are the primary, or only, ways in which females can win what he calls "the sex war"?[19] In short, does Lewis see victory for women as being essentially Pyrrhic in nature? Our answers to these questions will depend on our interpretation of Lewis's exposition -- in this story and elsewhere -- of heterosexuality as a violent power struggle, and of sex as violent tragicomedy.

Footnotes

[1] "Brotcotnaz" first appeared under the title "Brobdingnag," in The New Age, VIII (Literary Supplement), no. 10 (January 5, 1911), 2-3. The revised version was published as "Brotcotnaz" in The Wild Body (Chatto and Windus), 207-231.

[2] The Wild Body, 219.

[3] See M. Komarovsky, Blue Collar Marriage, 230-235.

[4] Lewis, The Wild Body, 207-208.

[5] Ibid., 215-216. (Note the fact that both Brotcotnaz and Julie are compared to a nun.)

[6] Ibid., 220.

[7] Cf. S. Brownmiller, Against Our Will -- Men, Women and Rape: E. Pizzey, Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear, and T. Breiter, "Battered Women: When Violence is Linked with Love," in Essence magazine, X, no. 2 (June, 1979), 74-75, 121-128.

[8] Lewis, The Wild Body, 212-213.

[9] See Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, and The Heart of Man -- Its Genius for Good and Evil.

[10] Lewis, The Wild Body, 219-221.

[11] Cf. S. de Beauvoir, The Second Sex; G. Greer, The Female Eunuch; S. Firestone, The Dialectics of Sex; and B. Friedan, The Feminine Mystique; E. Janeway, Man's World, Woman's Place; and S. Rowbotham, Woman's Consciousness, Man's World; and J. Mitchell and A. Oakley, eds., The Rights and Wrongs of Women.

[12] Lewis, The Wild Body, 224-229.

[13] Ibid., 228-229.

[14] Lewis's persona, Kerr-Orr, uses this word: The Wild Body, 229.

[15] The Wild Body, 230-231.

[16] Cf. April (The Vulgar Streak) and Tets ("The War Baby").

[17] Cf. Hester (Self Condemned) and Mary (The Red Priest), respectively, for examples of these two types of self destruction.

[18] Cf. Julie ("Brotcotnaz"), and Mary (The Red Priest).

[19] Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 205-208 and 215-227.

CHAPTER II

THE FAMILIAL PARADIGM -- THE VULGAR STREAK

The Vulgar Streak -- Its Parameters

First published in Great Britain in 1941, The Vulgar Streak has been out of print, until recently.[1] This is unfortunate because the novel is a work which combines many of the most noteworthy elements in Lewis's writing: namely, his power with the image, his observation of human relationships within a certain social context, as well as his sensitive exploration of the man-woman relationship *per se*. The novel is also an expression of, and paradigm for, all that was happening in Lewis's own social environment, in those painful times.[2]

Set against the period of the Second World War and the rise of Hitler, the novel tells the story of Vincent Penhale, who decides to transcend his working class roots, and their accompanying deprivation, by remaking himself into an upper-class "gentleman," by the use of the money gained as an elegant "front-man" for his counterfeiting friend Halvorsen, and by a totally self-willed effort at transformation of himself, socially, linguistically and even emotionally. Vincent also subjects his younger sister, Maddie, to this traumatizing process of change and by sheer force of will, re-models both himself and her into the anachronistically aristocratic, and indeed, mythical figures of "gentleman" and "lady."

Vincent seduces and marries April, an aristocratic and virginal romantic, who is tragically unprepared to face the ultimate denouement and truths concerning the real nature of her dashing husband. The dramatic climax of the novel comes when Vincent's true identity is revealed, as a result of his implication as part of Halvorsen's counterfeiting outfit, and worse yet, because he has helped conceal the latter's impulsive murder of Dougal Tandish, Maddie's malevolently snobbish suitor. Even when faced with these shocking facts, April still declares her loyalty and love for Vincent. But the trauma of these revelations is too much for her: she faints and falls, and dies as a result of the miscarriage which she suffers subsequently.

Upon April's death, Vincent is faced with the full implications of his role as imposter and as mentor to Maddie. He commits suicide, suffering no doubt from a complete crisis of identity and of guilt. However, his final instructions to Maddie are a revelation of his own growth in self-knowledge and in real knowledge of human nature, as opposed to his bitterly defiant analysis of the inequities of class stratifications. The novel ends, then, on a note of tentative hope that Maddie will learn from her own, April's, and Vincent's shared pain and love, and will therefore survive, not merely physically, but also emotionally.

At first glance, The Vulgar Streak may seem sketchy, and even carelessly written because of its printed format. However, on closer examination, the novel emerges as a starkly dramatic delineation of human relationships. Further dimension is added through the implicit understanding of how human relationships affect social interaction, and in turn affected by the social environment, its norms, values, and structures. In terms of this latter assertion, the work may also validly be seen not merely as a dramatic work of literature, but as an examination of society as it affects the individual -- his physical existence, his personality, and his very psyche. It is often tacitly assumed that each human being is, by and large, the sum total of heredity, family background, and socio-economic environment, and that these factors will dictate a person's relationship to himself or herself, to the environment, and it demands and pressures. It seems clear that social and economic forces will define, and may distort, the individual's capacity to relate to the reality of himself, or herself, and to that of others. Apparently, Lewis operates on these premises in writing The Vulgar Streak, for this novel, like the more masterfully executed Revenge for Love, both reveals and explores the nature of the contradictions by which these forces can create insurmountable barriers between the individual and any truly creative or meaningful relationship with his fellows, or even -- and this is the real tragedy defined in The Vulgar Streak -- with those whom he would love most dearly.

Of the function and subject of literature, George Lukacs says:

> Content determines form. But there is no content of which Man himself is not the focal point. However various the donnees of literature (a particular experience, a didactic purpose), the basic question is, and will remain: what is Man?[3]

If we accept this definition of the function and subject of literature, we will also see The Vulgar Streak as a most important work, analyzing, as do all of Lewis's works, the nature of man, the meaning of the relationships between man and woman, man and man, and the larger relationship between these individuals and the society of which they are a part, if sometimes also the victims. Admittedly, it may be possible to conceive of the man-woman relationship -- and, by extension, all human relationships -- without due consideration of social and other factors which, by influencing these relationships, and moulding these individuals, determine what attitudes, expectations, and psychic energy they will bring to bear on these relationships. Because The Vulgar Streak includes an awareness of these forces within a dramatic delineation of personality, personality interaction, and actual action, it becomes the encapsulation of a dialectic of society and humanity, which, because personally envisioned and delineated, is most urgent, because of its dramatic style and historical back-drop. This is the fact which gives the novel its overridingly dynamic quality, a quality which makes insupportable the idea that it should go almost out of print, particularly since its content is far from obsolete.

It is not enough, I think, for a writer to deal -- however vividly -- with the realities of man or woman; rather, he must see the realities of human existence within society in a sense which transcends sexual differentiation. In doing this, it is not enough either for him to realize the "contradictions" which society may establish between man and woman; such a realization may simply be to ignore the full significance of the content of human relationships, and to manufacture another cliché. Instead, the sensitive writer must see in human detail the fate of humanity in society, especially a society whose values of class, power and mobility exist without reference to true human worth.[4] Thus, when we say that Lewis reveals the physical and psychic destruction wrought by poverty in the life of one man and the women who love him, and whom he would like to love, we are also implying that Lewis has articulated a social tragedy in human terms. The importance of the novel lies in the fact that Lewis articulates this tragedy without loss of awareness of either the male or the female perspective.

It may be argued that The Vulgar Streak is a novel about a man's activities, and his ways of coping, or of not coping, with the material and psychic pressures of life in his particular society. But the novel is nevertheless poignantly a woman's book also, because it shows the effect on women's lives of the doings of the men they love, in ways that are highly realistic. Nor, on the other hand, does this assertion imply that these women remain passive figures in the work. On the contrary, both of the two major female characters in The Vulgar Streak, (April and Maddie), are quite active personalities -- April pursuing her ideal of love, despite the apparent negation of this love, and Maddie, grappling as best she can, on sexual, social and economic levels, with the contradictions which constitute her own reality. Both face inevitable bewilderment, heartache, and devastation of their hopes; the fact that they at least attempt to cope -- in varying degrees, and in different ways -- with these disturbing realities, is what makes them both active rather than passive. These women are shown as victims not simply of their social circumstances[5] (as is Vincent also), but moreover of their emotional circumstances -- that is, of their love for him.

It might be claimed that, in The Vulgar Streak, Lewis gives us a succinct depiction of how both men and women -- that is, people -- are subject both to external social factors, and to internal psychic forces in ways which challenge, and may even destroy, their very reality. As such, this novel is a book about people, which deserves serious reading by anyone interested in Lewis's work, and should not be lightly dismissed as an out-of-print oddity or an anachronism.

Section I: April

External Images

As stated previously, a basic premise for the observation of character delineation in The Vulgar Streak is the concept that each human being is moulded by a complex of factors -- heredity, family background, and socio-economic situation. Before we consider the characterization of April, we should remind ourselves of the assumption that it is these factors which define how the individual relates to others and to himself. This assumption is particularly relevant since it may justly be claimed that April is par excellence the personification of the romantic upper-middle-class woman, who, being freed from economic necessity, can devote all her creative energy to nothing more or less creative than the processes of love and loving, and who is, as a direct result of this fact, destroyed by the very love which she pursues so singlemindedly.[6]

The portrait of April is presented to the reader in much the same way as is the portrait of Gillian in The Revenge for Love.[7] These portraits are the vivid, one might almost say, thumb-nail sketches of a confident verbal artist. These sketches are highly effective; altogether, they give a startlingly real and vital portrait of a living, vital human being, who seems more like a vision from the reader's own memory than a figment of Lewis's imagination. Such sketches demonstrate an aphoristic skill with the image which marks the effect of the painter's eye in Lewis's work; as such, they are not unconnected with that evocative style which characterizes Lewis's paintings, in particular the sketches and portraits of women.[8]

Typical of this stylistic habit are the following descriptions, of April and of Gillian. In an early reference to April, Lewis reveals her natural beauty:

> They had been bathing from a boat. April was dragging *her long flamingo legs* on board, and Vincent was doing a last duck-dive, . . .[9] (The italics are mine.)

Lewis describes Gillian, however, with a highly carnal image, which reveals her crassly sensual nature:

> Her lips hung outside her face, in a scarlet pout, as if it was the inside of something slit open with a scalpel like the surgeons use, and that had curled out on opposite sides where the knife went in. Jack pulled her head down with his other hand and pushed his mouth into the wet cut.[10]

Examination of the contexts of these two quotations reveals the fact that, while the description of April and her naturally sensuous legs is given from the point of view of the omniscient narrator, the second reveals Gillian's sensuality from the point of view of the equally sensual Jack, the self-made satyr of *The Revenge for Love*. The *double-entrendre* of the second description is telling both in terms of Jack's own character, as revealed in his response to Gillian, and in terms of Gillian herself, as seen in the stimulus with which she provides him. The implication of the two images compared is this: April possesses a natural, spontaneous sensuousness, like that of a beautiful bird enjoying itself in a natural environment; her innocent sexuality is obviously a far cry from the arrogant sensuality of Gillian, as revealed in the phallic imagery which surrounds Jack's description of, as well as his response to her.

A comparable example of the use of semi-ironic *double-entendre* in the description of April is to be found in the following passage, where April is seen through Vincent's eyes; here, of course, the second dimension of insight given to the reader is an understanding of the deliberate and calculated nature of Vincent's sensuality:

> As Vincent Penhale looked down upon the ash-blonde silk of her head, which rocked and nodded as she talked, he appeared to be weighing something coldly: a pro, and a con. The ayes had it, it seemed. April was twenty-nine -- he gave her a year more in his secret computations. She had the nice face of a nice quiet twenty-nine year old girl. A big baby on the brink of thirty. As a dress-designer Penhale knew what the clothes she wore cost within a few shillings, and approved of their selection. *A scheme of milky-brown and dull red russets, blended with the mind in her mild grey eyes.* It was clever of her, Penhale reflected, to know the exact shade of her soul poor girl! A sad colour -- such as a soul gets, thought he, after thirty solid years of babyhood, and still wide-eyed and ingenuously be-lashed.
>
> She had a good body he could see, if a little on the heavy side. But he liked them heavy. What she did with her hips he did not know, but he saw they might need lacing -- at thirty -- though her waist was really small for a girl of her size. And the long wavering legs! He had enjoyed watching them stalking in and out of the table-d'hote at the hotel, beneath the weight of those quite Venetian shoulders of hers. *She was like a Titian Venus stilted up a foot or so and crowned with ashes instead of carroty gold*. *And* it was an elegant stem upon which all her upper self swayed so gracefully.[11] (The italics are mine.)

In this passage, we see Vincent as sexual predator coolly and shrewdly assessing his prey; but, simultaneously, we are being provided with a most vivid picture of that prey, the virginal April. It is this type of loaded description which marks Lewis's skill with the image, with forceful detail, and with insight into personality, and which also marks *The Vulgar Streak* as a highly visual and exciting novel.[12]

Internal Glimpses

The delineation of the character of April is effected by the force of the type of loaded description (previously considered), which combines both the method of evocative, externally detailed sketching, and the use of the basic ingredient of the "stream of consciousness" technique[13] -- that is, a revelation of the character's unedited thoughts. Through the delineation of April, we get a glimpse into the mind and psyche of a person whom it may be useful to call the "woman of the old order."[14] This is the woman whose socio-economic security enables her to make love and the pursuit of it her major concern in life, since all of the normal requirements or demands of survival are filled a priori by her class position and its accompanying advantages. Archetypally, this is the woman of the old order, who devotes all of her energy and consciousness to the pursuit of love, whose raison d'être is love. Such a woman, firmly enwrapped in the cocoon of her role as "lady," and completely the unquestioning product of her secure class position, is incapable of realistic character judgement or insight, since she lacks the balanced human perspective which comes from social consciousness, or from the useful assimilation of sexual experience.

April's bewildering and bewildered lack of sexual experience, and her rigidly upper-class-orientation are revealed in her response to male sexual approval, and in her naïve fantasies. These qualities are, in turn, typical of the kind of woman whom we have labelled "the woman of the old order" -- a type who resurfaces, tragically also, in the character of Hester, in Self Condemned. Both April's virginal nature and her rigid class-orientation are revealed in the following passages, which also make clear to the reader the complete psycho-sexual confusion which is inseparable from the sexual consciousness of this particular sort of unexposed individual.[15] As such, our title "woman of the old order" becomes also a label for describing a particular model of socially induced psycho-sexuality. Thus, we are told of April:

> She beamed silently in response. But as he only went on smiling at her, likewise in silence, she once more turned away her head. His steady smiling eyes told her something of which she had not been perfectly sure up till then. Her frown returned.
>
> Whatever it might cost her she must make up her mind to it -- for she already realised that there was a cost involved. This young man was among other things a cad. The sooner she realized that and took the necessary steps by terminating their acquaintanceship the better. Oh, how she wished she had understood this earlier!
>
> They lay, still panting from their recent exertions, for a few minutes more. The Italian boatman smiled at her in sunny detachment, comparing this big splendid foreign girl with his dirty raucous garlic-tongued housewife, whose skin was the colour of dirty mustard and her little bony legs shrunken with child-bearing. He smiled in sunny detachment and left it at that. But she saw his eye, with the innocence of that of an animal, basking lazily upon her beauties. Of a sudden she felt isolated and nervous. *At other times that would not have mattered. But there was another man here now, supposedly of her own class and kind, who turned out (shockingly) to be only another strange man -- in the category of boatmen, waiters, and game-keepers. Not as she had supposed a gentleman.*
>
> The boatman's oily Latin face became suddenly offensive. It had an insolent leer. There was nothing *sunny* about it! *The fact that the privileged man at her side had put himself in the same category as this unnoticed underdog, gave the latter an importance that otherwise he could not have had.* She flashed her eyes angrily at the harmlessly ecstatic fisherman.
>
> "I think we'd better go back," she said, as coldly as possible to the smiling Vincent, looking at him under her eyelashes, and then removing her gaze like a supercilious lighthouse, transforming its unwinking beam from one part of the ocean to the other.[16] (The italics are mine.)

But April is *not* a "supercilious lighthouse" -- she is, instead, a lovesick child-woman, whose burgeoning sexuality can only express itself in bewildering emotions, which she then rationalizes in terms of "*love*." It is also a mark of Lewis's insight that the following passage is not simply satiric melodrama, but also -- and especially -- a shocking glimpse into the sexual response of the romantic "woman of the old order":

> . . . And a painted hand drifted over in the half-light and settled, no more heavily than a leaf the wind has abandoned, upon hers. Quietly it settled down upon hers. But the leaf was hot.
>
> Her shoulders were slipping sideways and she drew them in to huddle them into a smaller compass since they were big shoulders, as

> if to go through a narrow opening -- there was a hot breath; her cheek felt a pressure for a moment, and two living things were moving upon it, against each other, and then they were gone. But she was being drawn in, and softly and warmly battened down: hands were pressing her body against . . . oh, oh, she caught her breath, her mouth went slack, it faded away, she had no mouth, and all her body was dissolving into a fiery trance. As she clung tighter with her mouth to his, deep panting sighs escaped her. Her body was not in the same place any longer, it had been lifted up, it had been carried away into a new dimension. She was riding a muffled, a rhythmic sea, she was now face downwards; her whole body was clinging to his. When the kiss had lasted a long, a very long lifetime indeed, she shuddered and drew her mouth away; then she pressed it back again, then again she withdrew it: then she put it down beside his ear and whispered "darling!" and he whispered "darling!" back. *Vincent and she were in love with each other. Now for the rest of time she should be his, only his! This was what life had been for.*[18]

Clearly, April's romantic fantasies are not unconnected to her lack of sexual experience and her lack of social consciousness. They evoke a form of psycho-sexuality which is both frightening in its unconscious snobbery and elitism, and vulnerable in its ignorance of the predatory nature of the sexual challenge which she faces. Thus, April fantasizes about Vincent, who, the reader is all too aware, regards *her* in turn merely as a suitably well-heeled sex-object; obviously, she could never understand his political, social and emotional cynicism, or the bitterness and deprivation of which these are products. She has no idea where Vincent is "coming from," either literally or figuratively, *but the reader has*, and the discrepancy between April's reaction to Vincent and the reader's lends irony to the following fantasy, revealing as it does simultaneously, April's involuntary snobbism:

> She turned this over in her mind for a moment or two. ("My husband is in the Anti-aircraft." Put in that way, it answered itself.) She looked up and smiled. An R.N.V.R. uniform would suit him well. One of her old cousins had been in the Naval Reserve in the *old* war. Yes -- the Navy. But of course on shore. It was with a *Navy League* eye that she henceforth regarded him.[19]

Her material survival assured by her class position, April can in fact afford to make love her whole existence. On the other hand, because of his class position, Vincent is merely making love his business for reasons that have nothing to do with love, but more to do with survival and mobility -- hence his careful choice of her. With shrewd insight into the nature of the female psyche, Lewis shows how April's material good fortune becomes the indirect source of her psychic misfortunes -- precisely because of her wealth and secure status, she is in a position where she can financially afford to make love the point of her whole existence. The question raised here, however, is: who can really afford -- in emotional terms -- to do this, especially when that love exists only in fantasy, outside of a clearly understood social context and perspective, and without an adequate knowledge of self and of the person loved?

This question and the answers to it, are dealt with in the portrait of April. Such love, Lewis seems to imply, is merely the price which April pays for her ostensibly carefree existence, and her lack of psychic exposure, or her very innocence, in a real world where innocence is not enough. This is not, of course, to say that the women of a less leisured life-style, that is, the working-class or working women, find that fewer problems result from the emotional need to love and be loved. However, it seems clear that such women are compelled to devote a great deal of physical and psychic energy to the demands of pure survival; this fact leaves them with less energy to invest in the search for love. With a smaller investment of this kind, defeat in this search may well seem less poignant; and is offset by even the smallest triumphs in the other aspects of their lives, namely; the search for physical, financial and social survival. In other words, the "lady" runs the risk of having no outlet for her energies other than in the emotional field, or in various undemanding, self-imposed activities. Her counterpart in the middle or working classes must divide her energies between the exigencies of survival, and emotional demands; thus the latter exists on a more active and diversified plane at all times.[20] (The varied nature of this existence, brutally demanding as it may be, provides its own sort of emotional protection, its own type of therapy, functionally speaking.)

Thus, we may see, encapsulated portrait of April, her situation, and her fate, major arguments and preoccupations of feminism through the ages;[21] by representing the "leisured woman," April also evokes her counterpart, the working-class or working woman (represented by Maddie). The result of April's devotion to love and love alone, the intricacies of the challenge of psycho-sexuality and social orientation which she faces, and her ultimate fate, are relevant to all women, and especially to those searching for a more whole existence through the growth of self-knowledge.

Love Versus Life

April is a woman in a trap -- a trap inherent in her social life-style, but moreover, structured by her emotional life-style. She suffers, therefore, not simply from the predilections fostered by her leisured circumstances, but also from those fostered by her emotional circumstances. Thus, unwisely, but inevitably, April makes love -- her love for the Vincent whom she thinks she knows -- the reason for her whole existence. This, then, is what the relationship becomes to her: this fact is revealed by her ultimate death, for, in this regard, the reader may feel persuaded that April does not die merely from the fall she takes in shocked reaction to the full extremity of Vincent's confessions,[22] but rather dies because she is quite destroyed by the discovery of the "real" Vincent.

For April, living is loving, and vice-versa; Vincent gives her something to love, and therefore a reason for living. When this chimeric thing is removed, they both suffer an identity crisis: there is no longer anything for her to love, and therefore there seems nothing to live for; her whole sense of being is shaken. Vincent, and the love of Vincent have now become April's reality, and when the discovery of his falseness destroys that reality, she no longer has any reality, any reason, or desire, to live. The truth of this crisis is revealed in the panic-stricken desperation with which April tries to avoid facing the facts about Vincent; the desperation of this reaction is clearly delineated by Lewis. He also makes clear the complete incapacity of this gentle girl to cope with the reality into which her romantic love and expectations have been transformed:

> In the firelight, which painted her face a lurid peach, she let her mind drift back to the beginnings of her life of love, to their holiday in Venice: brooding, she saw the handsome, strange, young man again, as she first had caught sight of him. It was in the lounge of the hotel. She recalled their golden days upon the Lido. She caught her breath as she remembered his wonderful high spirits. His seemed a life without a cloud. Her life, as it moved to mingle more and more with his, appeared to be passing into an unruffled golden age in which children -- her children -- would disport themselves, far from all threats except the gallant martial one of war. How absolutely she had lost her heart, in a manner that she could not have believed possible. And now all this — like fate unmasking itself, with hideous insults.

> Her gentle mind, of which the gentle contours of her face were the outward expression, was not shaped to receive a content such as this. Even to find a place in her consciousness at all, such events must civilize themselves, be toned down. Such a drama as had begun to be played all round her -- with herself forcibly recruited as one of the cast -- could only be seriously entertained by her inside an asylum. Outside, it just could not be true: such things simply did not happen. It was a dream from which she would wake up — put her arms round Vincent's neck and cry a little, then forget about it. This was not real -- she refused belief to it.[23]

April's fatal error (as it is the error of many women) is that she has wrapped her whole life, her whole psyche, her whole being, around her great love, this fantasy-surrounded mystery man. When her fantasy is shattered by the discovery that he is both a counterfeiter, an accomplice to the concealment of a murder, and also a member of the working-class in disguise, and all the mysteries surrounding him are clarified, April cannot cope with the reality of what Vincent really is, or the shock of the extent to which her love for him commits her either to arbitrary, prolonged fantasy (madness), or to a most unpleasant reality.

The unhappy facts of April's situation are clearly shown in the chapter entitled "Falsum in Uno, Falsum in Omnibus," where we see that the gradual disintegration of her dream-man leaves April a stricken being, who can only collapse and die from sheer shock. Faced with the dramatic denouement to the romantic drama which had been her experience with Vincent,(this denouement being clearly conveyed by the newspaper articles and his arrest), April insists on believing the truths implied by the newspapers and by his arrest in connection with Halvorsen, the counterfeiting outfit, and, as the reader knows, ultimately, by the murder of Dougal Tandish. To start with, April has only to face the fact that Vincent has been arrested along with Halvorsen, who is charged with counterfeiting, and to cope with the newspaper articles which allege that Vincent is only a working-class person who has pretended to be otherwise:

> It was the rich, quiet, tea-hour -- with the servant's dutiful footsteps again dying away outside: and April sat motionless, as if in mourning, in a plain black frock, gazing at an open evening newspaper. Its headlines shouted in the stillness --
> "POOR BOY PASSES HIMSELF OFF AS BARONET."[24]

April tries desperately to delude herself as to the real significance of Vincent's arrest by the police, and of the heavy bail which is set on his release. Her response not only shows her own incapacity to believe anything negative about the man she loves, but also the extent to which her emotions concerning Vincent have committed her to total loyalty to his shining -- though false -- image. Her thoughts on reading the newspaper reports are as follows:

> Then Vincent had been found by the police with Halvorsen, in the place where the latter forged his notes. Why had not Vincent realized what was going on there? She supposed the police asked that question too. They did not know Vincent as well as she did, or understand how unworldly he really was!
>
> It seemed that as yet, they had formulated no specific charges against him. (How could they, since Vincent had obviously done nothing, except -- for silly, romantic reasons -- known Halvorsen?) But the bail was heavy. The police were very unpleasant about him, it seemed -- in spite of the fact they had nothing against him. And here was this strange report that Vincent had tried to impersonate a baronet of all ridiculous things: and was, in reality, a coster or something equally fantastic![25]

April has to regard the allegations against Vincent's integrity as well as his class image as "fantastic," for such allegations, proven true, would challenge her whole reality. However, worse is to come, as Vincent's own admissions verify. April therefore proceeds from a refusal to face the possible truth of the initial allegations of the newspapers, and the implications of Vincent's arrest, through panic-stricken rationalizations, to sheer shock and misery. As she listens to Vincent's confession of his true social origins, and of the guilt he shared as the "front" person who passed Halvorsen's counterfeit bank notes, April faces a real crisis. Love of Vincent has been the main purpose of her life; now, she sees the Vincent whom she loved disappearing into thin air, to be replaced by a man who is a self-confessed wrong-doer, in addition to being far below herself in class and social station. April's whole reality is being challenged. This fact is clearly implied in the following passages. Of her reaction to the allegations against Vincent's class origins contained in the article in the newspaper, Lewis comments:

> She could imagine his father being . . . oh, a very fashionable dentist . . . horrid, as that would be. But not a . . . railway porter. She shuddered at the vistas this line of thought opened up.[26]

In her response to Vincent's confession of the real facts of his birth, it is clear that April's love for Vincent is a real emotion, involving real loyalty, not simply fantasy, as we see in the following:

> "Well!" He shrugged. "My father and mother were working people," he said quietly. "I am pukka working-class. I was born, as they say, in the gutter. I had intended to tell you. But not like this." He laughed and shrugged.
>
> "But, why on earth didn't you tell me, Vincent? I shouldn't have minded. Why should I? It would make no odds to me, if your father was a sweep."[27]

Thus, Lewis shows that April is mature enough to accept Vincent's social and psychological dishonesty -- his social counterfeiting -- concerning his social origin, with grace and love. However, his confession of his real part in passing actual counterfeit notes, that is, his legally unacceptable counterfeiting, is quite another matter, and shakes her to the core -- and rightly so, one may feel:[28]

> April became very pale. She looked up at him. She now saw the reality standing in front of her. A man, who, six months ago, had been a stranger, who was now her husband, and who . . . subsisted by criminal means. The very sofa she sat on had been purchased with forged notes.
>
> Horror riveted her mild grey eyes upon this handsome face, confessing itself a cheat -- this ever so vaguely wolfish face, now ornamented with a half-grown black moustache, so gravely examining her, as if it were a doctor reporting the results of a diagnosis. She could not have taken her eyes off him, if she had wanted to. But she did not want to. She wished to familiarize herself with what she now saw for the first time. The original stranger she had met in Venice, and the greatly loved man, that was her husband, whose child she was carrying, struggled for mastery. It would depend upon which of these two men she found herself looking at, when she stopped gazing at Vincent, what her subsequent attitude towards him would be.
>
> "I am not a criminal," he said very dejectedly, as if the reflection was not a very stimulating one. "At least I'm not certain any longer what I am: but I don't believe I was cut out to be a rogue."
>
> "Don't say such absolutely dreadful things, Vincent!" she implored. April was seeing now standing before her, only her lover, driven to the wall, in need of her help. The battle had been won over the dark stranger, with the disreputable black moustache that gave a wolfish prominence to the cheekbones.[29]

Clearly, Lewis shows that, at this painful moment of denouement, both April and Vincent are facing the onset of a crisis of identity, he racked by self-doubt now that he is finally confronting the full implications of, and responsibility for, his actions, and she robbed of her raison-d'être, and the resplendent object of her love.

Added to this identity crisis for April (who had identified so closely with her mysterious lover, now destroyed), is the shock and dismay of realizing to what extent her love and loyalty implicate her in his guilt. The self-rejection which results from this painful realization compounds the crisis for April, as is proven in the following passage:

> "Vincent."
>
> "Darling? Yes?"
>
> "They can . . . prove nothing against you!"
>
> At the reflection of what these words implied, she shrank back

into herself. She, too, was conniving to defeat the ends of justice. Now she had, however, indirectly, joined the Halvorsen gang! But she did not care! So long as Vincent, her love, should be spared, it did not matter about her.[30]

But the worst shock, the unacceptable, the unabsorbable shock, is still to come in the form of Vincent's revelations of his own implication in the concealment of the murder of Dougal. Her immediate reaction to this final revelation is almost ironically typical of April, of her spontaneousness, her "ladylike" efforts to conceal these spontaneous emotions, and of the destructive controls which she, as "lady," has always imposed on herself; small wonder, then, that, subsequent to a final gesture of self control, she collapses in a dead and fatal faint:

> April's face whitened, her nails dug into the stuff of the sofa upon which she sat.
> "Dougal?" she asked, weakly panting out the words. "You mean . . . the man -- murdered? You don't mean that!"
> Vincent nodded.
> "That's right. Halvorsen shot him."
> April clapped her hand up on her mouth, as if to stop a sudden cry. Then she lifted it to her hair, which she patted.
> "For some reason, best known to himself," Vincent proceeded to inform her, "Tandish went snooping round the place where Halvorsen engraved his notes. He was a romantic idiot: it is just the sort of thing he would do. Bill found him there and killed him. . . . Where I come in as an accessory. Bill asked me to go and see him. I had no idea what had happened and like a fool, I went. He showed me the body of Tandish. He asked me to help him get rid of it. Like a fool, I did so. He may not always keep his mouth shut about that."
> April swayed a little, then she slid down sideways, rolling onto the floor.[31]

As Lewis suggests, the "bourgeois" woman, or the "woman of the old order" has her story also. This is what is revealed by a study of April's case: hers is the tragedy of the socio-economically free woman, who, despite her economic freedom, is the victim of her emotional needs. Hers is, in fact, the tragedy of the bourgeois woman -- and, perhaps, is also the tragedy, and the concern of Everywoman.

Footnotes

[1] Robert Hale (London) published the 1941 edition of The Vulgar Streak. This first edition was destroyed almost completely in the bombing of Paternoster Row in 1941; a limited edition by Robert Hale appeared in 1942; Jubilee Books (New York) republished the novel in 1973. (All of my references are taken from the 1941 edition.)

[2] See A. Blott's comments on the social context of the novel, and on Lewis's portrayal of Vincent, the protagonist, as a symbolic Hitler-figure, in "The Merman and the Mint: A Study of Wyndham Lewis's The Vulgar Streak," in D. Bessai's and D. Jackel's Figures in a Ground, 50-60.

[3] G. Lukács, Realism in Our Time -- Literature and the Class Struggle, 19.

[4] Cf. R. Sennett, and J. Cobb, The Hidden Injuries of Class, 191-271.

[5] Maddie is the partial victim of the deprivation represented in her working-class roots, while April is entrapped in the role of "lady," dictated by her upper-class position. (Cf. the portrait of April with the analysis of Lewis's depiction of the aging gentlewoman, Jane Greevey, of The Red Priest, in Section II of Chapter IV of this thesis.)

[6] Cf. B. Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, and G. Greer, The Female Eunuch, for analyses of the dangers of such exclusive pursuit of romantic love.

[7] See Section II of Chapter V of this thesis.

[8] Compare Lewis's portraits of Viscountess Rhondda (1932) Miss Rebecca West (1932), and the various versions of the "Portrait of the Artist's Wife" (1936, 1936-7 and 1942), all in the Walter Michel edition, Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, plates 104, 786, 125, 127, 129, and 144 respectively.

[9] Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 39.

[10] The Revenge for Love, p. 118.

[11] The Vulgar Streak, p. 15.

[12] Cf. T. Materer, Wyndham Lewis The Novelist, 11.

[13] See William James on the "stream of consciousness," The Principles of Psychology, Vol. I, 224-290.

[14] The full meaning of this term should be seen vis-a-vis Viscountess Rhondda's Leisured Women, Alexandra Kollontai's The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Woman, Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women, Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, and G. Greer's The Female Eunuch.

[15] The word "individual" is used here rather than the word "woman" because Martin, Vincent's friend, reveals this same combination of virginity and class snobbery.

[16] The Vulgar Streak, 40-41; I have used italics to indicate the fact that, for April, Vincent's open sensuality makes him less of a gentleman. Her own unresolved sexuality confused with her unconscious class snobbery makes her see openness about sex as being by definition a lower-class phenomenon. For April's sexual romanticism, Cf. Ibid., 42.

[17] Cf. Comments on Lewis's use of the exploratory metaphor in the Introduction to this thesis.

[18] Ibid., p. 49. (I have italicized the final sentences, which, I feel, follow the "stream-of-consciousness" method.) (Cf. A. Blott, Op. Cit., 52-53.)

[19] Ibid., p. 45-46.

[20] Cf. M. Komarovsky, Blue Collar Marriage, 49-81.

[21] On this concept, see Rhondda, et al., Op. Cit.

[22] The Vulgar Streak, p. 216.

[23] Ibid., p. 206-207. I have underlined the mask image because it is one of the thematic images recurring in this book, as also in the novel The Revenge for Love. (Cf. Section IV, Chapter V of this thesis.)

[24] Ibid., p. 205.

[25] Ibid., p. 205-206.

[26] Ibid., p. 207.

[27] Ibid., p. 209-210.

[28] Cf. A. Blott, Op. Cit., 50, and 56-57.

[29] Ibid., p. 211-212.

[30] Ibid., p. 215.

[31] Ibid., p. 216.

Section II: Maddie

The Survivor

The portrait of Maddie, Vincent's sister, seems to present what many may regard as the ultimately tragic female condition -- the state of the woman who has been moulded, almost created by the influence of a man. Maddie's self-concept, her behaviour, goals, total image, even her mode of speech, have been created by a man: namely, her brother, Vincent. However, this is not completely true, and Maddie's story is not a completely tragic one -- unlike that of Vincent and April. Certainly, much of Maddie's personality is revealed through her relationship with a man (her brother). However, this fact need not necessarily be seen as a negation of her personality, if we take the truly feminist [that is, the humane], attitude that the female is just as inseparable from the male as is one side of a coin from another, as Lewis seems to imply here, and in The Art of Being Ruled.[1] Maddie is the only one of the three main protagonists in The Vulgar Streak who survives; how she survives, and the nature and significance of her survival are worth examination. But before such examination, we may gain useful insights into Maddie's personality by an understanding of her relationship with Vincent. Maddie is Vincent's little sister, misguided enough to allow Vincent, himself ultimately misguided, to be unquestioned mentor in the development of her emotional, cultural and social life.

The portrait of Vincent is a portrait of an alienated personality, who gains self-knowledge and the capacity to love at the tragic cost of the loss of the life of one woman who loves him (April), and of his own ruin, and eventually his own life. He is a person so imprisoned by his hatred and anger at the inequities of a society of which he is the victim, that he is incapable of real creativity, human empathy or really equal relationships or friendship, or of any valid combination of sexuality and tenderness. For Vincent, there is a dichotomy between the wellsprings of his tenderness and his sexuality; thus, he expresses his sexuality with April, and his tenderness with his sister, Maddie. But, even with Maddie, this is only a suppressed tenderness, a shared sense of futility, and a violent loyalty.

With Vincent, Maddie shares a strong bond of pain[2] and desperation, rather than the joyful spontaneity which we might associate with love, filial, sisterly, or otherwise. The only spontaneous expression of this affection which is allowed by Vincent is demonstrated in the "Bucking-hams incident,"[3] where April surprises Vincent and Maddie indulging in a ritualistic fantasy-dance, no doubt itself the reflection of their own inner near-hysterical desperation at the grim realization of the consequences to their once ailing father of the family's terrible poverty and their mother's alcoholism. The "bucking-hams incident" is an offshoot of a scene where Lewis depicts Vincent teaching Maddie proper pronunciation.[4]

We are aware of the fact that Vincent has completely transformed himself, in the attempt to hide the "vulgar streak" which he believes mars his personality as a result of his working-class origins, by changing his whole life-style with the help of his ill-gotten gains as the "front-man" for a professional counterfeiter.

We also know that he has changed all the class-related aspects of himself by changing all his social manners, behaviour, habits and associates, and above all, his language and speech.[5] Vincent has changed both his language _and_ his life, and has attempted to change himself, into something which is unreal, namely the mythical figure called "The Gentleman." He attempts to make corresponding changes in his sister, believing, because of the distortions of his values, that he is helping her by so doing. The pain and conflict which they both share as a result of these ill-conceived attempts at change (which only amount to ultimate or partial self-destruction), form the stuff of their relationship with each other, its shared anger, bitterness and desperation, and the accompanying suppression of ordinary or normal emotions. This point is clearly shown in the hurt which Maddie feels at the fact that Vincent has married April, without inviting her to his high-society wedding:

> "Have I enjoyed myself? Is that the question? Yes, I suppose I have. I have just got married."
>
> "Married?" Maddie was so astonished that she lost her impassibility, and borrowed one of Vincent's frowns.
>
> "Yes. Last week in Paris. You didn't see about it in the _Daily Mail_? Quite an occasion. The bride, Miss April Mallow, wore a gown of white satin La Vallière, with a veil of Venice lace. A great show. Bride given away by her uncle, Sir Lionel Mallow. Reception afterwards at the Crillon . . . . Oh, yes. It was very posh."
>
> The statuesque serenity of the face before him began to show signs of emotional collapse. It's [sic] surface commenced to writhe. But Maddie lowered her face and said in a husky voice:
>
> "I think you might have told me, Vincent. I know I'm nothing. . . . I'm only your poor little ex-model of a sister . . ."
>
> "Whom I certainly would cut if I encountered her as I was coming out of the church, my bride upon my arm! . . . It's true. I should!"
>
> "How _hard_ you are Vincent!" A single stately tear descended the pallor of her cheek. She spoke without reproach.
>
> "Ah, that I _have_ to be. Who is better able than you Maddie to understand all about that? . . . But now it is all over -- thank God -- you must meet April. I may send for her tomorrow. She's quite a decent girl you'll find."[6]

Here, Lewis shows that Vincent's desire for completely aristocratic associations is so strong that he has no hesitation about hurting his sister's feelings. This arrant cruelty in the vain pursuit of what he considers the most desirable social acceptability is typical of the sort of emotional compromises which, Lewis implies, Vincent has made all too often, and which are at the root of his own growing emotional alienation. Clearly, Maddie does not participate in this alienation, as is proven by the very fact that she _is_ hurt by Vincent's snub; the fact that she _is_ still capable of such an emotional response is sufficient proof that she has not committed the type of psychic and emotional suicide which is the price of Vincent's fanatical social aspirations.

The Masks of Oppression

We have claimed that Maddie is revealed through her relationship with Vincent. Lewis makes it very clear, on the other hand, that Maddie, in turn, provides revelation of her alienated brother's true character. This is plainly articulated in the following passage:

> In some ways, however, this mask of a girl, with her static face, served as a key to her brother -- who was not so unsolemn as all that himself. In spite of the fact that he made such an active and as it were, over-deliberate use of his personality, and went suavely through his mortal part, he was born to the tragic roles as much as she. They were very near together in some respects, these two. Both took life with such a black seriousness at bottom. Everything that happened to them set up so dark a tension. One covered up with masculine veneer, of fearless laughter. The other faced life unsmiling and unwinking, with great dark rounded eyes that looked like shock-absorbers for something much more lively and sensitive within.
>
> There was another link between these two -- of which this guarded aloofness, and even stateliness, was the expression. The relentless pressure of the English _class_ incubus had poisoned the existence of one as much as of the other. A morbid condition obtained in both cases: both had suffered a deep infection.

> This had even to be allowed for in accounting for Maddie's impassibility. One reason why she held herself so stately and unsmiling -- perhaps a little _queenly_ -- was because she had had to be always on her best behaviour. Maddie had not sufficiently mastered the arts of careless ease of those who had never had to think about class -- about accent and deportment. She so remained aloof in her ivory tower of classic physical perfection, where she could be a girl of few words, and those words picked beforehand, without haste, so that no grammatical slip might escape her.[7]

In this passage, Lewis expresses more clearly perhaps than anywhere else, the poignancy of a class oppression which so inexorably moulds the personality and the fate of the individuals in society who are unfortunate enough to be born into the wrong class.[8] This description of Maddie's style of speech, and her anxiety about her presentation of herself is reminiscent of his portrayal of another working-class young woman, Margot, of whose voice Lewis remarks:

> An attractive foreign accent -- say the last vestiges of aristocratic French on the tongue of an emigre -- made her speech pleasant and a little 'quaint.' It was not a foreign accent, however. As she had been born poor, she had taught herself English, and so had evolved a composite speech of her own. It was flavoured with American talkie echoes; but on the whole it suggested a French origin, and was extremely pretty, though her voice had gone a little hollow with the constant effort cautiously to shape the words correctly.[9]

The same anxiety is expressed in Maddie's motionless mask of a face, in her blank gaze, as in Margot's "strained and hollow voice";[10] in their every expression of self, both reveal the ineradicable mark of psychic[11] oppression. Undoubtedly, it is in this light that we must view the character and personality of Maddie, the survivor.

Brothers, Sisters and Lovers

Of Maddie's feeling for Vincent, Lewis tells us:

> Her love for Vincent, for all her studied coldness, shone warmly out of this blanched immobility, and her lips still trembled

> slightly as she gazed at him now -- full of admiration for this wonderful brother of hers (*so much nearer to her than was her husband, Dick*) -- such a gallant figure; such a perfect gentleman; so loyal a friend.[12] (The italics are mine.)

This strong brother/sister relationship is part of a model of such relationships presented by Lewis. René and Helen of *Self Condemned* share this same fierce devotion, and both, like Vincent and Maddie, are in marriages in which communication with their respective spouses is obviously limited. Taking a psycho-analytic approach, one may well question whether Lewis is expressing, through the depiction of such relationships, a bias against the sexual male/female relationship, since the sexual relationships of these characters with their mates are to a great extent devoid of, or lacking in, the sustained empathy, communication, or *tenderness*, which exists between the brothers and sisters.

Thus, when René is to part from his sister Helen, in preparation for his doomed trip to Canada, Lewis paints a poignantly tender picture, as, for example, in the following scene:

> However, in spite of so much discouragement, she persisted. 'I have always been so fond of you -- I mean *personally* of course -- that it has been an obstacle, isn't it odd, to my reading you. As if strangers alone were interesting! But I was very impressed by what you told me.'
>
> He put his arm around her waist, and tears came into his eyes. 'We must part, Sister. I am afraid we shall not meet again. Everything is over with me, you know, I feel.' He put his head down to her shoulder, and she could feel him shake.
>
> Helen was deeply astonished at what was occurring, for she would have said that it would be quite impossible for this masterful brother of hers so to shrivel up and cry like a child.[13]

This scene precedes the frantic parting between brother and sister; but this parting (where Helen practically falls under the train, adding to the trauma of the moment), is further preceded by the following declaration of *unusual*[14] passion by René:

> 'I am so glad,' Helen told him, looking up. 'You certainly show nothing, and I am glad you have that ability to insulate.'
>
> 'No, I have not been sad. Saying goodbye to you is the saddest thing that has happened to me yet, or that ever will. You have always been what I love best in the world. I hate this parting . . . I hate this parting!' He clung to her with tears in his eyes.[15]

The tenderness of this parting between René and Helen is parallelled by the tenderness expressed in Vincent's goodbye note to Maddie, (which she receives after his suicide), and throughout the chapter entitled "Brother and Sister."[16] Vincent's suicide note, addressed to Maddie only, reads as follows:

> "I am leaving you, Maddie, darling. I am blotting myself out tonight and you will see me and hear me no more, but remember me as one who loved you very dearly. Kiss mother for me, and ask her forgiveness. Do what you can to take care of her. Good-bye, Maddie, my sweet."[17]

Both René and Vincent manifest with regard to their favourite sisters a tenderness which it is far from their wont to manifest with regard to anyone at all, and least of all so with regard to the women with whom they are sexually linked. The question is: Why does Lewis depict these contrasting relationships in this way?

With respect to Vincent's relationship with April, we may well be most struck by the sexual predatoriness which marks his pursuit of April, his pride in the conquest of her,[18] and his subsequent manipulative psychological brutality.[19] Tenderness is only shown openly to April when Vincent has reached his crisis of identity and self-realization,[20] and when, already, their relationship has been unfairly tested, to the point of destruction -- not only, we note, of that relationship merely, but also of April herself.

Repeatedly, Vincent attempts to stifle normal reactions of tender feeling; he does this with regard to his father's corpse,[21] with regard to his mother,[22] and with regard to his father's old friend, the amorphous Amy.[23] Such tender emotions, however normally they are elicited, are always stifled by Vincent. Nowhere before the culmination of the novel, and of his own crisis, does Vincent give free expression to such feelings, allow himself to admit fully or openly to such feelings, to love of others, or to give himself up fully to the experience of loving. This quality in Vincent is clearly parallelled by a similar incapacity to combine tenderness, communication and sexual love within a single creative relationship with one woman. We may well ask the question, then: what, if anything, does Lewis imply about human sexual love by his depictions of these petrified emotional life-styles? Is he implying a judgement against such love as opposed to the sacred bond of blood? Additionally, how do all of these implications relate to a view in Lewis's work, of the real human need to love and be loved?

The issues are further confused by the possibility that Vincent's relationship with his sister seems to border on the sexually-based as well, since his reaction to her flirtation with Dougal (whom she had met through Vincent himself), seems to be rooted more in sexual jealousy than in mere brotherly censure or anxiety. This fact is revealed, or at least, hinted at, by the images chosen for the expression of his anger, since, as always, choice of image must be regarded as being highly indicative of underlying views or emotions, consciously implied, in the work of any conscious writer or artist. The most striking image which Lewis makes Vincent use in expressing his anger at the affair between his sister and Dougal (who is also possibly a government agent) is loaded with uterine implications: "I feel his damp whisky-shaken hand roaming round on you is like a cockroach in my bath-tub."[24]

The bath-tub image is a uterine, and a highly sexual one. Therefore, it is not fanciful to assert that, through the study of Maddie, Lewis's exploration of the meaning of love in human relationships, in a manner characteristic of his dynamism, has here entered into uncharted seas.

Footnotes

[1] Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 163-168, and 189-230.

[2] Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 111.

[3] Ibid., 146-147.

[4] Ibid., 145-146.

[5] Cf. A. Blott, Op. Cit., 45-50.

[6] The Vulgar Streak, 112. (Note the error in the use of "it's.")

[7] Ibid., 106-107. (Note the use of the mask image.)

[8] Cf. Senett and Cobb, Op. Cit., 191-219.

[9] Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 67.

[10] Ibid., 377. (See also Section IV, of Chapter V of this thesis.)

[11] Here, distinctions between the "psychic" and the "psychosocial" become blurred.

[12] The Vulgar Streak, 107.

The reader may wonder whether the name "Dick," given to Maddie's husband, is not perhaps symbolic of a purely sexual role played by her husband, to whom she is so much less close than to her brother? We are never introduced to Dick, but it is he who asks Maddie for a divorce (text, 225), accusing her not only of adultery with Dougal, but hinting that she is in love with Vincent (224). These facts should be compared with the reference to the possibility of incest between Maddie and Vincent, made by Dougal (160).

[13] Lewis, Self Condemned, 137.

[14] Cf. Ibid., 140-141. Compare this description of Rene with the passion of his parting with his sister Helen.

[15] Ibid., 139.

[16] The Vulgar Streak, 103-112.

[17] Ibid., 245.

[18] Ibid., 91.

[19] Ibid., 94-95.

[20] Ibid., 205-215.

[21] Ibid., 117.

[22] Ibid., 119.

[23] Ibid., 117-118.

[24] Ibid., 167.

Section III: Vincent and Maddie

Models and Masks

It should be useful to compare briefly April and Maddie, both "ladies" of different types, both imprisoned in the rigid role which entitles them to this label. April is born to this status, born into a family so wealthy that her aging mother does not really have to care about anything -- roles, conventions, _or_ real values -- and is, instead, eclectically snobbish. Mrs. Mallow approves of Vincent for some rather dubious reasons, it seems; her assessment of him is as follows:

> Mary Mallow had of course pondered this interesting young man too. She had remarked the budding interest her daughter was taking in him: she had noted the evidences as she thought of economic ease -- the age of the "boy" in question (not much more than thirty-six though probably that) and for Mrs. Mallow the man must not be too young -- _the right side of forty_ was the best as she saw it. She had appraised the resolute eye, if a thought ill-tempered. Self-confidence -- he had that. Public-school backgrounds appeared indicated. Perhaps Oxford. Mr. Penny-Smythe was Oxford. So that was all right. Mary Mallow had not regarded it as necessary to restrain the tendency to smile with welcoming lips, on the part of her daughter April, when a certain tall impeccably dressed fellow-guest at the hotel would draw near to them and bow, with a hint of un-English formality. (But Penhale was a Cornish name. And Cornish-men were Celts of course. Some were very odd-looking. Penhale, as a matter of fact, was the best-looking Cornish-man she had ever seen.)[1]

Additionally, Lewis tells us that a "certain criminal gleam in the clever hazel eye" of Vincent appeals to Mrs. Mallow, and that these two smile at each other as if they were "accomplices in something charming and disreputable."[2]

Despite this apparent camaraderie, however, Vincent belongs to that class of people whom Mrs. Mallow despises. He comes, like the Italian waiter who unwisely addresses Mrs. Mallow at Previtali's, from that group of people who are forever branded on their tongues, by their language,[3] word, and gesture, as belonging to an untouchable class in the eyes of such people as Mrs. Mallow. It is ironic, therefore, that she approves and accepts, is even charmed by, the disguised Vincent, since she remarks, concerning the Italian waiter, with the greatest brutality, even crudity: "There is nothing I deprecate so much as colloquialism in a Wop!"[4] Mrs. Mallow, therefore, with her snobbish sensibilities, her very real crassness and her shallow values, provides part of April's social and familial environment.

Lewis presents Vincent's family in sharp contrast with what Mrs. Mallow is shown as representing. This family, with its second-hand gentility, provides the class context against which both April's and Maddie's playing of the "lady" are to be seen. Clearly, then, the depiction of Mrs. Mallow, and of Vincent's family, composes a deliberately loaded structural manoeuvre on Lewis's part.

Maddie has not been born into the same position as April; she has been carefully trained for the role of "lady" by Vincent, in his determination to help his sister escape the trap of their working-class origins. However, Lewis makes it clear that Maddie escapes the trap of class in which her family is caught only to find herself in another -- namely, the trap of emotional rigidification which this constant and unnatural role-playing required of her, she has lost both her individuality, her vitality, and her sensuality. These images are worthy of detailed consideration, therefore.

First, we see Maddie as a sad, though fashionably adorned, carving:

> Madeleine came down the steps without speaking, her large earrings swaying as she moved, in the shadow of her sweeping sable hat, dating from Chelsea's 'gypsy' vogue.
>
> Vincent took her pale statuesque face, with its sad red lips, in his hands, and kissed her cheek. She gave his arm a quick squeeze, and stood back, with the same absence of expression, almost wooden -- but withal sensitively carved. They looked at each other, he smiled, a little nervously for him.[5]

Next, Lewis traces the connection between Maddie's talent for modelling for portraits, the only thing which she can do to earn an independent living, and the rigidity with which she holds herself. However, he makes it clear that this rigidity is not merely a physical habit, but is also a psychological trait, which results from the pressure of the pose of lady, which overwhelms her personality, saps her vitality, and submerges her natural sensuality. It is clear, here, and on the last two pages of the novel, that Lewis intends to imply the ironic, double-edged nature of the means of survival which is all that is open to this elegant, beautiful, but uneducated girl. And it _is_ ironic that Maddie, who suffers from a psychic mummification which results from having channelled all her emotional and creative energy into posing as something she is not, must continue to earn her living, that is, _survive_, by _posing_, as an artist's model, allowing herself to be transformed, through the impersonal medium of art, from a vital, sensual creature, into a cold _objet d'art_. Thus, even her job is ambiguous.

Clearly, Lewis implies that Maddie's survival, (as opposed to the destruction which is the fate of Vincent and April) is Pyrrhic in nature, achieved at the cost of her vitality, her sensuality, and her humanity. (The paradoxical nature of such survival, or achievement, is examined elsewhere by Lewis, in Part I of the work entitled _Paleface: The Philosophy of the "Melting Pot."_[6])

Lewis indicates all of the foregoing points concerning Maddie, her talent for modelling or posing, and the ambiguities this implies, as well as the cost of her existence or survival, in the following passage:

> Before her marriage with Richard Morse, a young hack cartoonist she had met at her brother's, Maddie had sat for the head, as portrait-model, for a number of years. She had first mounted the model's throne at eighteen. And there she had queened it, till four-and-twenty.
>
> Sitting without more movement than a thing of stone (for she was conscientious) for hours at a stretch -- inspiring, as she felt herself to be doing, with her rounded Graeco-Roman beauty, herds of flattering students, yet whom she had to keep at a distance, and whom she actually rather frightened with her noble severity of looks and carriage -- this inexpressibly sedentary, this peculiarly lifeless occupation, had stamped her for good. She always gave a little the impression of somebody posing, and constrained under penalty of dismissal to keep quite still. Not that it was her nature, anyway, to relax easily into a smile.
>
> In some ways, however, this mask of a girl, with her statis face, served as a key to her brother -- who was not so unsolemn as all that himself. In spite of the fact that he made such an active and as it were, over-deliberate use of the personality, and went suavely smiling through his mortal part, he was born to the tragic roles as much as she. They were very near together in some respects, these two. Both took life with such a black seriousness at bottom. Everything that happened to them set up so dark a tension. One covered up with masculine veneer, of fearless laughter. The other faced life unsmiling and unwinking, with great dark rounded eyes that looked like shock-absorbers for something much more lively and sensitive within.[7]

Elsewhere, Lewis gives an example of the detailed attention with which Vincent has trained Maddie, subjecting her not only to classes in enunciation, but moreover, to his will. Here, the apathy, the absence of vitality, which marks Maddie is shown to be a result of the subjection of her own will to Vincent's, since his will is bent on the achievement of an unreal, empty and mythical status.[8] The elocution class is described as follows:

> Vincent Penhale and his sister Maddie sat in the 'throne-room,' as Halvorsen called it, in Vincent's Thames-side residence. Both their faces wore an intent look. The family-likeness was very much to the fore. They gave the impression of two people engaged in a seance; a seance in which one was subjecting the other to his will, as if in the case of an entranced medium and a hypnotist. Vincent, of course, was the hypnotist.
>
> Pale and monumental, Maddie sat staring in front of her and waiting. In view of her past profession, her attitude might have most aptly suggested that she was posing -- say for a period portrait of a defunct Infanta: of which august original she had the pasty cheeks, the vacant, haughty eye. She gazed ahead, in expressionless calm, except for the faintest pained contraction of the brows.
>
> But Maddie was neither being subject to hypnotic-suggestion, nor was she posing for an Infanta. Vincent sat squarely in front of her. Beside him, propped upon a chair, was a drawing-board. To this was pinned a large sheet of white paper.[9]

Unlike the mask of elegance, gaiety and arrogance which her brother uses as his defence against the world, Maddie's mask-like expression, and deportment, like the role of lady which has been superimposed on her, is one which is continually slipping. By stating repeatedly that Maddie's mask begins to break up, so to speak, Lewis is obviously indicating that Maddie's role-playing has not yet become a part of her self, and that the habit of pretense has not yet been internalized into her psyche -- as it has into her brother's. When Maddie is hurt or upset, the mask-like expression on her face does in fact change. Though she may not express joy, she certainly does express sorrow, as in the following passage:

> The statuesque serenity of the face before him began to show signs of emotional collapse. It's [sic] surface commenced to writhe. But Maddie lowered her face and said in a husky voice:
>
> "I think you might have told me, Vincent. I know I'm nothing. . . . I'm only your poor little ex-model of a sister . . ."[10]

Similarly, in response to Vincent's questions about her obviously meaningless marriage (Lewis never exposes the reader directly to Dick, Maddie's husband), Maddie's serene countenance explodes:

> "What's the matter with Dick?" Vincent asked her, suddenly and angrily. "Doesn't he love you?"
>
> "I think Dick does, Vincent," she looked doubtfully at him. "Yes, Vincent, of course Dick does."
>
> "Why have you got no children? Are you really as cold as you look? You ought to have children. You have been married for nearly three years."
>
> The perfection of beauty, hearing itself denounced as barren, broke up its features into a hideous mask of grief. Wailing, she fell sideways upon the couch, where she lay and gave herself over to weeping.[11]

Similarly, as Lewis describes Maddie telling Vincent of their alcoholic mother's drunken escapades, Lewis makes use of the mask image once more:

> "The police knocked Minnie up at three in the morning." Maddie's mask began to wriggle at the lips. "It's so . . . humiliating, Vincent!" She made an effort to hold her face still at the mouth. "It's awful . . . Vincent!"
>
> She placed her face in her hands, as if to hold the stern mask together.[12]

In the last interview between brother and sister, where Lewis shows a newly self-aware Vincent admitting to the moral responsibility for his misguided tutelage of his sister, and his influence on her, Lewis develops the mask image so that it becomes an extension of Vincent's desolated recognition that he has destroyed his sister, in his effort to save her. Here, Lewis uses this image not merely as a method of character revelation (as previously with regard to Maddie), but additionally, as the means by which response and awareness are both explored and revealed. This dynamic use of the image both as a medium of revelation and of exploration is particularly Lewisian, and finds its parallel in the sustained and recurring images of the mask and the bird in The Revenge for Love. Thus, Lewis describes Vincent and Maddie, in this last grim interview:

> "We're sunk, you and I. We sink or swim together, don't we, sister mine? Well, I am sunk. So there it is. But look, Mad, I have

> been all wrong. I put you up to a lot of things that are . . . oh, unsound. Forget about all that."
>
> The girl's eyes were wide open with amazement, the mask began to writhe at the lips. He saw the sister he had loved so much and worked on like a sculptor with his clay, breaking up beneath his eyes, as a result of his assault upon her dream. He remembered how he had seen the same thing occurring with April, prior to her crashing to the floor, almost on the same spot now occupied by Maddie's feet. Hastily he turned away and pointed at the windows.[13]

The newly-liberated Vincent sweeps aside all his former training of his sister by calling it "unsound"; the result of this is shattering for Maddie, as he is annihilating the dream of a socially acceptable and therefore ideal self which, under his direction, she has cherished and used as her raison-d'être for so long. In short, Vincent is leaving her in an emotional vacuum, which she must now fill on her own. Having lost the self-image and life goal (that of being a "lady") with which he had provided her, she must now find new direction, and a new way of viewing herself. Thus, the shift in Vincent's values and aspirations also denotes the necessity for a corresponding change in Maddie's values, world view, self-concept, and aspirations; how she meets this challenge forms the content of the conclusion of her story, and, significantly, of the novel.

Vincent's solution to Maddie's problem of psychic immobility is as follows:

> "Now, Mad, go find a proper man. And don't worry, Mad, my sweet, if he jettisons a few silly old aitches. Forget about all that. Anything -- anything is better than some dirty little middle-class fellow. Pick a duke or a dustman. Take my advice and skip the Middle-class."[14]

However, it seems clear to the reader, that, despite Vincent's now more realistic social values, the only way in which Maddie can rectify her mistake is to seek survival in her own way, on her own terms, rather than by searching for the mythical "proper man," whether duke or dustman. This assumption is justified by the conclusion of the book, where, once again pursuing the only independent occupation open to her, her job as a model, Maddie meets a new man, fittingly, a "young man who bore a distant resemblance to Vincent Penhale."[15]

At this point, Lewis makes clear the fact that the quest for survival is taking its toll on Maddie: she has "more pins and needles in her legs than she used to have, and dizziness sometimes at the end of the day," but she is "still the most immobile as well as the most beautiful of London models."[16] The very understated, yet ever so slightly optimistic or positive conclusion to the novel seems to indicate that Lewis is positing the value for women, of independent[17] survival -- however Pyrrhic ostensibly -- as an a priori, before the demands of romance or sexuality are tended. If we consider feminism as being concerned with the survival of the female as an independent individual, then the feminist implications of Lewis's depiction of Maddie's independent survival are obvious. Clearly, however, these implications, in terms of the totality of the novel, are counterbalanced by Vincent's suicide.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Lewis delineates the role of "lady," as played, with whatever nuances of difference, by April and Maddie, in sharp contrast with its obvious class extension or complement which is represented by the Penhale family. This contrast is all the more marked with regard to April because the family represents the absolute opposite of her upper-class background; with regard to Maddie, the contrast is ironically marked, because she would have been a part of this environment, if not for Vincent's tutelage. Lewis projects this class environment in the chapters entitled "The Funeral"[18] and "Vincent in the Family Circle,"[19] where both Maddie and Vincent are placed in the context of their family, after their father's death. Here, few readers can ignore the manner in which these people respond to each other, and Lewis's revelation of the hostilities which rend the family group apart, as a result of the different class aspirations of its members (and the differing success which they each find, in terms of these aspirations).

Here, also, Lewis demonstrates the nature of the class brand, as a phenomenon which can inexorably bind, or cruelly shatter, the family unit. Lewis provides these insights through his portraits of the family members, the brother Harry and the sister Minnie, (as well as the sisters-in-law, Flo and Bessie), of the tyrannic alcoholic invalid who is the mother, and of Amy, who was once their father's intimate friend. Lewis's descriptions of these people produce a verbal collage, evoking pseudo-middle-class gentility. These people are almost Victorian in their traditionalism, and quite immobilized by their own images of class acceptability. Thus, Vincent's older brother, Harry, is described as follows:

> Harry shot a hard ugly look at Vincent's well-tailored sveltness. Himself he was a bald and dusky wage-slave of forty-five about. He was a mechanic, whose work was in a truck repair shop. A fine straight nose, as good as Vincent's, and fine darting dark eyes incongruously embellished his hard and mournful visage, well-scrubbed with Lifebuoy soap for the occasion.[20]

The members of the family obviously resent both Maddie and Vincent a great deal. Yet, almost against their own will, they are mesmerized by the appearance of upper-classness which is projected by Vincent's dress, speech, and manners:

> The attraction exercised by such fine clothes, and such fine manners-to-match, had caused Harry's wife, in spite of her rugged 'independence,' to propel her small and sweaty East End person grudgingly towards Vincent.[21]

A similar resentment is felt against Maddie, as Vincent's protegee, and as the only other member of the family who seems to have "escaped" the curse of their class position. This resentment is shared by the neighbours, also, of course, who feel quite free to express their disapproval of this escape from what is regarded as the proper and just position into which these two escapists[22] had been born, within the sacred law of the class system -- a law which, paradoxically, is both resented and accepted by these people. Thus, one of the neighbours comments, concerning Maddie:

> "Where's the sense," asked a neighbour with militantly folded arms, "in bringin' children up above their station, I should like to know? That young lady . . . young Maddie, I should say -- she doesn't never seem happy do she, for all her dollin' up and puttin' on the talk?"
>
> "It wasn't 'ere she learnt that, Mrs. Fitzsimmons," Flo told her, wagging her head. "Madeleine wasn't brought up as you call it to act like that."
>
> "That's right," Harry agreed. "Mad was a quiet sort of kid before she began going about with them artists, Vincent took her to see."[23]

Lewis shows the virulence of this resentment, which interferes with the spontaneous expression of fitting emotion, even grief at the father's death, as in the case of Minnie:

> Minnie had her own private grief. Secretly, as it were -- since everything with her was undertaken with a fearful privacy -- she had wiped her eyes. Furtively she had blown her nose, as the burial

> service proceeded. But through the stingy, secret, tears she espied her baby sister's antics. And the service ended with a dry-eyed Minnie, and a general feeling that Vincent and Maddie were as usual standing out and apart from the body of the family, in splendid isolation, and, as usual, making an unnecessary exhibition of themselves.[24]

Lewis's portrait of this fractured family unit is an indication of the destruction of even the most basic loyalties -- that of the family and of blood -- which can be fostered by a class system which is arbitrary and unequal, condemning people to an intellectual and emotional frustration which they have done nothing to deserve. Society has punished Vincent's family for their very existence, it seems, transforming what might have been individuals into mere overburdened, resentful, self-hating "wage slaves." Vincent and Maddie may try to escape this fate, but Lewis makes it clear that society and destiny have punished them, and will continue to punish them, in subtle and unsubtle ways, for this escape. The family members know that to be upwardly mobile, they must acquire mastery of language, but they resent this very acquisition (as represented in the speech of Vincent and Maddie), revealing a schizoid quality in themselves which is fostered by their own ambivalent acceptance of their class position, since this very acceptance imprisons them further in the trap of class. Obviously, Lewis is defining personal and intergroup alienation within this family as a direct result of the inequities of the society's class system; the family, as the basic unit of the society, then, may be seen as exhibiting a fragmentation and alienation which is doubtless manifested elsewhere, on every level, of the society. Thus, Lewis's portrait of "Vincent in the Family Circle" transcends the purely individual to encompass a more important social critique.

Among his own family, Vincent's position is that of the upper-class person, respected yet resented. This ambivalent relationship is part of the contradictions and the alienation which exist in this family. Thus, Lewis tells us:

> Vincent's restrained affability, as well as his indifference to tie-pins, was creating a good impression. He had been making some headway even with the implacable Flo. Things were more harmonious than might have been expected. Conversation became general, with Vincent's cultivated voice dominating the family board, however. When its accents of embarrassing refinement broke out among them (all the others had to do was to close their eyes -- to believe they heard the boss speaking), they tended to still their own voices to listen.[25]

But the members of this family exist in constant conflict with one another, however much effort may be made to conceal, or to avoid the expression of such conflict. This is an inevitable conflict, based as it is on larger frustrations, resentments, and the friction of aspirations pursued on the one hand, and, on the other, the snobbery of the victim, which is displayed with such arrogance by the family with regard to Vincent:

> "Who would be one of the poor! What an inferno it is."
> "There 'as to be poor people, Vincent! We can't all be toffs, not like yew," Flo told him.[26]

The alienation of the family members from Vincent is a result of this snobbery of the victim, their own paralyzing acceptance of their class position, and resulting self-hatred. Vincent's alienation from them is a result of the fact that he is not really at ease with his new, but only apparently successful self, and of the fact that his effort to escape from his class-position is not the result of any true liberation from the domination of the class system, but rather a futile escape attempt. Despite his "classy humanitarian invective"[27] against class, Vincent has not really rejected the class system; he merely wants to escape it, to get on top of it, to be in the superior position. But, as such, he too hates the victims of class, as represented by his family, and he too shares their ambivalence and self-hatred. Lewis clearly demonstrates these points, in the following passage, where Vincent reveals his admiration for their sister Victoria, who has somehow migrated to Western Canada, where she succeeds in living a pseudo-upper-class life:

> "If the young," Vincent continued to assert, "have the gumption, they effect their escape. Take Victoria."
>
> "Ah! Take Victoria," Flo mocked.
>
> "Victoria set everybody in this family an example. She did a bunk, didn't she, into Western Canada -- where she has a beautiful home, plays bridge every night, has a Japanese gardener, and a Negro house-man."
>
> "_And_ she lets us all know it! 'Ouseman! She calls it _butler_, that old nigger wot she 'as. We never 'ear the last of 'im, nor of her Jap gard-in-er. I thought you'd bring _Victoria_ up, Vin!" Flo laughed bitterly. "Thought we'd 'ear somethink about _Vicky_ before we'd done."
>
> "But was that intelligent of her -- to get out of this? Do be sensible. America has a classless society. In principle . . ."
>
> "In principle's right!" Harry interrupted him noisily, the old shop-steward coming out strong. "There isn't no classless society, Vin, not in America no more'n wot there is here, and don't you believe it, boy, when they tell you so. They kid you there is. That's all baloney. Use your intelligence, Vin."
>
> "Very well. But even a _principle's_ something, Harry! It is only natural, hang it all, for a person bowed down under class-taboos here . . ."
>
> "I isn't bowed down," protested Flo. "Is I?"
>
> "No, but you speak a slave-jargon and can't help yourself -- would it not be highly sensible to escape to a place where one is free from the stigma -- at least from the _stigma_ -- of class? Here the poor are treated as creatures of _another clay_. That is the point, Harry. Since there are no niggers here, they had to create niggers. The poor are the niggers in this country."
>
> "So they is over there," Harry replied.
>
> "Would Victoria -- I just put it to you -- ever have had even a black butler in this country; let alone a Japanese tree-surgeon to stop the teeth of her decrepit sycamores?"
>
> "You 'as one, Vincent -- accordin' to wot Maddie says: you 'as a butler. He's white too," Flo retorted, with a kindled eye that showed she felt his armour had been pierced.[28]

Mother, Son and Daughter

Mrs. Penhale, Vincent's and Maddie's mother, is a partial invalid and an alcoholic, whose most successful weapon is moral blackmail. She is the cause of a great deal of Vincent's and Maddie's agony, since she spends on alcohol the money which Vincent sends her.[29] Though we may view her alcoholism as the distorted response to distorting living conditions, Lewis suggests that this addiction is allied to complete moral irresponsibility. This is implicit in the merciless way in which she manipulates her children, refusing even to participate fully in the funeral service of her husband. Thus, our introduction to Mrs. Penhale as she greets Maddie and Vincent throws as much light on their personalities, as it does on the nature of the relationship between brother and sister:

> The bedroom was all bed and no room. Vincent and Maddie stood in the narrow trench between the bed and the window. Vincent looked down at his mother.
>
> "How do you feel, Mother?" he asked, with a simple tenderness, taking her hand.
>
> Mrs. Penhale choked off a coughing fit and patted her chest elaborately. Her flannel nightdress was frayed and unclean. The crumpled sheets had smears upon them. One stain she tried to hide. He guessed what sort of stain it was. The sweet odour of whisky was clearly discernible in the dark air.
>
> The old woman looked up at her son rather with the expression of a particularly double-faced child, who is conscious of being loved by her parents in spite of everything, but who has so many misdemeanours to conceal that she expects some reprimand at any moment, and is ready to bluff it out. Vincent was pappa and Maddie mamma, and they had come to her bedside to ask her how she was. A great gulf naturally was fixed between the child mind and the adult mind. She could never quite tell what they were thinking -- only by guessing at it. But *Vincent* she could always manage.
>
> "I'm a weenie bit better than wot I was, Vincent," she told him hoarsely. "It's the bronchitis."
>
> "I can hear it."
>
> Maddie left the room quietly. In her large shock-absorbing eyes was a curious expression. It seemed indicative of some unkind emotion.[30]

In this passage, it is clear that the mother is quite adept at, and deliberate in, her ruthless manipulation of her children, particularly Vincent, whom she feels she can always successfully manipulate. The distortion of this mother-child relationship is also clear -- in fact, Lewis indicates that the children must play the parental role to this irresponsible parent, bringing the contradictions within the family relationship full circle, so to speak. The final sentence seems to imply that Maddie resents her mother, and this response is worth comparing with Vincent's response of tenderness, itself an emotion rarely shown by him. However, this contrast seems a result of the fact that, though Vincent may have symbolically rejected his family and all that they represent through his own social aspirations, and his successful acquisition of socially proper language usage, behaviour and life-style, the maternal link is much stronger than any such rejection, and he therefore cannot resist the ploys of his mother. Maddie, on the other hand, can, because she is less emotionally isolated, and therefore less removed from the squalor of their lives, and from the real contribution which her mother's self-indulgence and irresponsibility have doubtless made to this misery. Additionally, Maddie may also be jealous of the hold which the mother has over Vincent.[31] This possibility may seem particularly attractive if the reader views the relationship between Maddie and Vincent as being latently incestuous -- in nature, if not in action. Additionally, if we view Vincent as suffering from Oedipal conflict resulting from his symbolic rejection of his mother through his rejection of what she represents socially, then this unresolved conflict may find its resolution in tenderness towards his sister, who, in terms of familial bonds, is an extension of the mother. Such speculations arise as a result of ambiguities which surround the brother-sister relationship in this text, as also (between René and Helen) in Self Condemned; however, they remain irreconcilable, and merely represent to the reader the exploratory function of Lewis's art.

However, what Lewis does make clear is the fact that the moral irresponsibility and selfishness of this woman (however much these may be a response to dehumanizing living conditions), are in fact linked with the miserable death of her husband, and may actually have been the catalysts of this death. This fact has been initially revealed to us when Maddie tells Vincent the news of his father's death:

> "Did he die . . . easy?" Vincent asked stirring things about on the table with his finger. "He had everything he wanted? Or he was not in want. He was all right was he?"
> Maddie wiped her eyes for a moment with her handkerchief.
> "You know what mother is, Vincent."
> He looked up quickly.
> "Oh, what about her? Didn't she get the doctor at once?"
> Maddie shook her head.
> "Of course she said Dad was putting it on -- sprucing. You know what she is like. The poor old man was delirious for the best part of a day in the back room. Mother was in one of her tempers. In the end I think she got frightened. I think Dad frightened her by the things he said . . . . Then she got a neighbour to 'phone for me. I found him raving."
> Vincent sat, his face contracted, staring at the floor.
> "Sprucing. The domestic discipline that is aimed at getting the wage-slave off to work each day, whether he feels up to it or not. When he falls ill he is treated as a malingerer, until he grows delirious . . . . Pretty awful, isn't it?" he said. "Pretty bloody awful, what!"[32]

Clearly, Lewis is showing us that the working-class man, as exemplified by Mr. Penhale, may well be the most in need of liberation of us all:[33] he is made the workhorse of the family, and cannot be ill without being accused of malingering, and he is left to die, cold and alone like a broken animal who has been destroyed by the cruel indifference of a technological world in which he does not belong.

With the introduction of Maddie's painful fantasy, provoked by the sight of a horse dying at the side of the road, *en route* to the grave, Lewis illustrates, by a process of extrapolation, the real conditions of aging and dying for the urban poor, who are themselves like animals, the residue of a peasant class in a rapidly changing technological world. Maddie's fantastic vision of her father's death is as follows:

> A dying horse, lying in a pool of blood at the side of the road, was watched by a group of men. They looked to Maddie as if they had attacked it and were watching it die. There was no truck standing near it. Of course *they* were not responsible for the conditions of the horse! The sight had shocked her into a distortion -- into *blaming* somebody. The pathos of the great bloodstained horse -- struggling to live, its giant muscles striking out for it, in feeble stampings of the air -- had torn away the screens, behind which human death is enacted off-stage, its reality sublimated.
>
> She had an inartistic glimpse of a delirious old man, whose equally aged wife had refused him when he had asked to be taken into bed beside her to be warm when first the great chill descended on him. She saw the old man thereupon, like a dying animal, his teeth chattering, crawl into a closet-like chamber beside the kitchenette and sink panting upon a rickety camp-bed, to face death alone.
>
> Then it was, no doubt, that the delirium came down. The cold of the limbs and back was forgotten in the drunkenness of fever. He imagined himself warm again, perhaps, under an august sun, back in his hey-day among the young men he grew up with on the land.
>
> The tears fell faster under the veil, as the dying horse stained her mind with its blood like a terrible sunset, where a moment before she had been unconscious of anything except the rain, and the general greyness and senselessness of life, and the smell of Amy. Are horses visited by delirium? She hoped they might be -- and just end in a fevered dream, no worse than an ordinary nightmare, such as everybody had.[34]

By including this fantasy, Lewis contrasts Mr. Penhale, representing the urban poor, with the animal on the farm, who, like the rural peasant, he at least reinforced by the natural environment. Simultaneously, he is comparing the urban poor to the animal which has somehow got caught in a technological world in which it is simply redundant, and in which it is destroyed or eliminated with the same cruelty which Lewis calls the "murderous absent-indifferent cruelty which Lewis calls the "murderous absent-mindedness of science."[35] Here, Lewis is dealing not simply with an animal image (with all the implications of freedom, virility and strength traditionally represented by the horse as masculine image), but rather with the whole issue of aging[36] and dying (inseparable parts of living), and of what technological society -- that is, our society -- does with, and to, its old, its poor, and its vulnerable. Thus, Maddie's disturbing fantasy, provoked by the sight of the horse dying, is to be seen not merely as an extremely lyrical passage interjected into the action of the text. It is, also, the means by which Lewis gives the reader, through Maddie's searing insight into what her father's death must really have been like, a corresponding insight into the nature of aging or dying in technological society for those (symbolically seen, like Mr. Penhale, as originating in rural society) who have not been wholly transformed by the machine age.[37]

Maddie's fantasy, naturalistic as it is, becomes even more interesting when compared with the very surrealistic fantasy with which Vincent responds to the reproduction of the Guardi painting which he contemplates in a shop window in Venice, at the opening of the novel:

> In the shop window hung a large photogravure, in colour, of a picture by Guardi. The picture represented a scene in Venice when this extinct showplace -- a godsend to Thomas Cook -- was alive with passion and intrigue. It revealed what underlay the formal beauty, which today alone remains, like a splendid ball-dress once worn by a mistress of great princes.
>
> A sinisterly darkened lofty apartment, into which a crowd of small masked figures had just poured themselves, gathered in a dark palaver. They had gone aside, into this empty room in some tarnished

> palace, to set up a dark whisper. Then later, when the maskers had dispersed, probably in a moonlit salizzade or streetlet, a long dagger would flash, a little masked figure would fall, crumpling up like a puppet. Expectant and intent, they crowded their masked faces together.
>
> "A great swell, G-Guardi!" stammered Martin dully, his eyes fixed in painful concentration upon the masterpiece.
>
> But his tall friend eyed bleakly the painted scene: the only sensation of which he was conscious was fear. He felt personally involved in the plots of these masked and nameless beings of disintegrating pigment, as if they had been plotting against him. His eyes dilated and a careworn expression came into his face.[38]

By the difference in nature and content of the two fantasies, Lewis reveals the difference in the personality, consciousness, and in the quality of the awareness of Maddie and Vincent, respectively. On the one hand, Maddie's subconscious gives her a further insight into human life and the tragedy of mortality; on the other hand, Vincent's fantasy is merely a metaphor for the guilty paranoia which -- logically enough -- preoccupies his mind, just as Lewis shows his role-playing as absorbing all his energy and creativity. The difference between these two fantasies, their content and meaning, is surely the means by which Lewis indicates major psychic differences between Maddie and Vincent. These differences are, in turn, indicative of the differing fates which will be theirs in context of the total plot of the book, and in context of the differing demands which are shown as being made on them, directly as a result of their differing sexes.[39]

Footnotes

[1] The Vulgar Streak, 22-23.

[2] Ibid., 68.

[3] Cf. Ibid., 33-34 and 37.

[4] Ibid., 83.

[5] Ibid., 104.

[6] Lewis, Paleface: The Philosophy of the "Melting Pot," 79-80.

[7] The Vulgar Streak, 106.

[8] Cf. Ibid., 180.

[9] Ibid., 145.

[10] Ibid., 112.

[11] Ibid., 166-167.

[12] Ibid., 168. The reader should note in this passage, the use of the words "Maddie's mask," instead of "Maddie's face."

[13] Ibid., 224.

[14] Ibid., 226.

[15] Ibid., 246.

[16] Ibid., 246.

[17] Vincent had offered to get Mrs. Mallow's lawyer to force Dick to support Maddie, after their divorce. Maddie freely chooses to return to modelling instead -- see the text, page 225. One must note that, apart from Margot's holding a job in the early part of The Revenge for Love, Maddie is the only one of Lewis's women who works. As such, she is left, by the action of the novel, in the position of the working woman.

[18] Ibid., 113-129.

[19] Ibid., 130-144.

[20] Ibid., 115.

[21] Ibid., 115.

[22] Vincent fondly addresses his father as "Old Escapist!" (text, 117), as he looks at the latter's corpse lying in the coffin before the funeral.

[23] Ibid., 119.

[24] Ibid., 129.

[25] Ibid., 131-132.

[26] Ibid., 134-135.

[27] Ibid., 135.

[28] Ibid., 136-137. Clearly, Lewis is indicating that Vincent accept as admirably "classless" a society in which the "Japs" and the "niggers" are available as servants. However, when he finds himself, in his own society, in this inferior role, he escapes it, merely evading the unequal functioning of the society for himself, rather than rejecting social inequality per se. Flo's counter, that Vincent too has a butler, and one who is white, at that, is highly relevant to this point.

[29] Ibid., 108.

[30] Ibid., 119-120. Concerning Maddie's ill-concealed hostility toward her mother, see N. Friday, My Mother / My Self, The Daughter's Search for Identity, 160-201. Compare also Maddie's adoring attitude toward Vincent, text, 107.

[31] Ibid., 107-109.

[32] Ibid., 107-108.

[33] To substantiate this claim, compare: E. Bott, Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families, 193-230; P. Filene, Him, Her, Self: Sex Roles in Modern America, 69-77; M. Komarovsky, Blue Collar Marriage, 112-177 and S. Terkel, Working.

[34] The Vulgar Streak, 126-127.

[35] Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 12.

[36] Cf. Lewis's remarks on the Youth Cult in The Doom of Youth, The Art of Being Ruled, 186-192, and 293-296, and Time and Western Man, 53-54. See also S. de Beauvoir, The Coming of Age, 131-415, and G. Sheehy, Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life.

[37] On the subject of mechanized man, see Lewis's The Art of Being Ruled, 427-428; Snooty Baronet and The Red Priest (where man-as-machine is exemplified in the chief male protagonists); and Time and Western Man, 392-418.

[38] The Vulgar Streak, 11.

[39] As a man, fulfilling the compulsorily active role of the male, Vincent feels called upon to actively respond to, and cope with (however unwisely) the problems of his family's situation. The traditionally more passive role of female allows Maddie just enough freedom with which to escape from the hazards and costs of such action.

CHAPTER III

MEN WITHOUT WOMEN --

A STUDY OF TWO NOVELS (TARR, AND SNOOTY BARONET)

The title of this chapter does not indicate that we are dealing with portraits of men isolated physically from women, but rather that we are dealing with male figures who have rejected the female principle in their lives. These novels are concerned primarily with men who may in fact have sexual and other relationships with women, but whose social and affective demands and attentions are never directed towards the women who are merely their sexual partners, but are reserved rather for someone or something else. This "someone else" may be a sister, as in the case of René and Helen, of Self Condemned,[1] or a good friend, as in the case of René and Rotter of the same novel, or Pullman and Satters, in the trilogy The Human Age. On the other hand, the capacity for tenderness and communication, or these very qualities themselves, may not exist in the personality of other men in Lewis's fiction, as in the case of Snooty or Tarr, who can be seen as excising from their psyches any need or potential for such tenderness or communication, and filling this void with varying types of alienated egotism.

If we accept the female principle or the female influence as representing the sensibility which is in touch with the inner well-springs of emotion, and the workings of the psyche, then these Lewisian characters represent people who reject the potential for androgynous development within themselves, and who, rejecting such a sensibility in themselves and in others, substitute devotion to an idea. This idea may be art (in Tarr's case), satire (in Pullman's case), behaviorism (in Snooty's case), or mere undiluted and alienated egotism (in René's case). It seems permissible to read into Lewis's exploration of these characters the idea that such persons, by this process of self-amputation, become examples of untrammelled egotism, petrified psychically into something sterile, hard and empty. As such, these personalities atrophy and they become monsters of the ego.[2] The nature of this process of self-calcification, and the connection between this process and these men's inability to fully relate to women, constitute a theme basic to these novels, and also to the Lewisian exploration of human life.

Tarr: Men Against Women

Tarr

The novel Tarr presents the reader with a tangled chain of human interaction which includes, excludes, or transcends simple sexuality. As in all of Lewis's work which explores the man-woman relationship, the novel is concerned with the comedy, tragedy and the tragicomedy which result from such interaction.

In this novel, Lewis reveals the kaleidoscopic quality of human relationships which reverberate and interact in combinations which defy simple sexual definitions. There is the Tarr/Bertha interaction, which is linked to the Bertha/Kreisler interaction, which in turn is linked to the Tarr/Kreisler conflict. Then there is the Kreisler/Anastasya/Tarr interaction. This is also connected to the Anastasya/Soltyk interaction, which is also, in turn, related to the Soltyk/Kreisler conflict. The final link in this chain of dynamic relationships is the inflammable one. Exploding into violence, it destroys the very humanity which was the strongest mark of this chain of highly differentiated types of interaction.

Thus, Tarr's rejection of Bertha leads her to Kreisler; but Kreisler is also attracted to Anastasya, who is, in turn, attracted to Tarr. Tarr meanwhile uses, but cannot definitively choose, either Bertha or Anastasya. Kreisler, similarly, uses Anastasya as the excuse through which he can vent his anger with Soltyk because of the loss of his access to Volker's finances, and because of his ambiguous relationship with Volker. In this sense, Soltyk is the link between the two worlds of Kreisler's sexuality -- or latent sexuality -- the world of women (Bertha and Anastasya), and the world of men (Volker, and Soltyk himself). Thus, it is not the woman, Anastasya, who is the dynamic figure in Kreisler's social and sexual worlds, but rather a man, Soltyk. This fact is related to our theme in this chapter, and is not unsupported by the text, as is seen in the following description of Kreisler:

> Kreisler's one great optimism was a belief in the efficacy of women. -- *You did not deliberately go there -- at least, he usually did not -- unless you were in straits. But there they were all the time, vast dumping-ground for sorrow and affliction -- a world-dimensioned pawnshop, in which you could deposit not your dress-suit or garments, but yourself, temporarily, in exchange for the gold of the human heart*. Their hope consisted, no doubt, in the reasonable uncertainty as to whether you would ever be able to take yourself out again. Kreisler had got in and out again almost as many times as his "smokkin" in *its* pawnshop.
>
> *Women were Art or expression for him in this way. They were Man's Theatre. The Tragedies played there purged you periodically of the too violent accumulations of desperate life. There its burden of laughter as well might be exploded*. -- Woman was a confirmed *Schauspieler* or play-actress; but coming there for illusion he was willingly moved. Much might be noticed in common between him and the drunken navvy on Saturday night, who comes home bellicosely towards his wife, blows raining gladly at the mere sight of her. He may get practically all the excitement and exertion he violently needs, without any of the sinister chances a more real encounter would present. His wife is "his little bit" of unreality, or play. He can declaim, be outrageous to the top of his bent; can be maudlin too; all conducted almost as he pleases, with none of the shocks of the real and too tragic world.[3] In this manner woman was the aesthetic element in Kreisler's life. Love, too, always meant unhappy love for him, with its misunderstandings and wistful separations. He issued forth solemnly and the better for it. He approached a love affair as the *deutscher Student* engages in a student's duel -- no vital part exposed, but where something spiritually of about the importance of a nose might be lost; at least stoically certain that blood would be drawn.
>
> A casual observer of the progress of Otto Kreisler's life might have said that the chief events, the crises, consisted of his love affairs -- such as that unfortunate one with his present stepmother. -- *But, in the light of a careful analysis, this would have been an inversion of the truth. When the events of his life became too unwieldly or overwhelming, he converted them into love, as he might have done, with specialized talent, into some art or other.*

> He was a sculptor -- a German sculptor of a mock-realistic and degenerate school -- in the strange sweethearting of the "free-life." The two or three women he had left about the world in this way -- although those symbolic statues had grown rather characterless in Time's weather and perhaps lumpish -- were monuments of his perplexities. After weeks of growing estrangement, he would sever all relations suddenly one day -- usually on some indigestible epigram, that worried the poor girl for the rest of her days. Being no adept in the science of his heart, there remained a good deal of mystery for him about the appearance of "Woman" in his life. He felt that she was always connected with its important periods; he thought, superstitiously, that his existence was in some way implicated with dem Weib. She was, in any case, for him, a stormy petrel. He would be killed by a woman, he sometimes thought. This superstition had flourished with him before he had yet found for it much raison d'être. -- A serious duel having been decided on in his early student days, this reflection, "I am quite safe; it is not thus that I shall die," had given him a grisly coolness. His opponent nearly got himself killed, because he, for his part, had no hard and fast theory about the sort of death in store for him.
>
> This account, to be brought up to date, must be modified. Since knowing Volker, no woman had come conspicuously to disturb him. Volker had been the ideal element of balance in his life.
>
> But between this state -- the minimum degree of friendship possible -- a distant and soothing companionship -- and more serious states, there was no possible foothold for Kreisler.
>
> Friendship usually dates from unformed years. But Love still remains in full swing long after Kreisler's age at that time; a sort of spurious and intense friendship.[4] (The italics are mine.)

The similarity between Kreisler's and Tarr's psychological world-views is revealed if we compare the foregoing view of women in Kreisler's life (as Kreisler sees them and reacts to them), and Tarr's ruminations on the subject of love:

> What is love? he began reasoning. It is either possession or a possessive madness. In the case of men and women, it is the obsession of a personality. He had presumably been endowed with the power of awakening love in her. He had something to accuse himself of. He had been afraid of giving up or repudiating this particular madness.[5] To give up another person's love is a mild suicide; like a very bad inoculation as compared to the full disease. His tenderness for Bertha was due to her having purloined some part of himself, and covered herself superficially with it as a shield. Her skin at least was Tarr. She had captured a bit of him, and held it as a hostage. She was rapidly transforming herself, too, into a slavish dependency. She worked with all the hypocrisy of a great instinct.
>
> People can wound by loving; the sympathy of this affection is interpenetrative. Love performs its natural miracle, and they become part of us; it is a dismemberment to cast them off. Our own blood flows out after them when they go.

> Or love was a malady; it was dangerous to live with those consumed by it. He felt an uneasiness. Might not a wasting and restlessness ensue? It would not, if he caught it, be recognizable as love. Perhaps he had already got it slightly. That might account for his hanging about her. He evidently was suffering from something that came from Bertha.
>
> Everybody, however, all personality, was catching. We all are sicknesses for each other. Such contact as he had with Bertha was particularly risky. Their photographs he had just been looking at displayed an unpleasant solidarity. Was it necessary to allege "love" at all? The word was superfluous in his case. The fact was before him.
>
> He felt suddenly despondent and afraid of the Future. He had fallen beneath a more immediate infection.[6]

Elsewhere, Tarr muses:

> Women's stormy weakness, psychic discharges, always affected him as the sight of a person being seasick. It was the result of a weak spirit, as the other was the result of a weak stomach. They could only live on the retching seas of their troubles on the condition of being quite empty. The lack of art or illusion in actual life enables the sensitive man to exist. Likewise the phenomenal lack of nature in the average man's existence is lucky and necessary for him.
>
> _Tarr in some way gathered strength from contemplation of Bertha. His contradictory and dislocated feelings were brought into a new synthesis._[7] (The italics are mine.)

Clearly, women, and the possibility of sharing "love" with women, or a woman, are equally meaningless or irrelevant, finally, to _both_ of these men. Tarr's cerebral analysis of love as an addiction compares with Kreisler's emotional stereotyping of women into the secondary role of refuge or solace or outlet. Obviously, both men do not view women as in any way their equals, or as legitimate or acceptable objects of their desires. In terms of the plot of the book, this similarity of emotional life-styles is an active ingredient. It is as if the reverberation of Tarr's rejection of Bertha goes far beyond Bertha to touch Kreisler, _via_ Anastasya, encompassing in the interim, two deaths and one birth. This imminent birth (Bertha's pregnancy which results from her rape by Kreisler) gives Bertha the leverage to get Tarr to marry her, but it also gives Tarr an alibi -- he can now tell himself that he has married Bertha out of charity and self-sacrifice, not out of love or commitment. Love would entail choice, and therefore moral responsibility -- which Tarr always avoids scrupulously, by the _use_ of humour and laughter as a defensive technique against emotional appeals or stimuli.[8]

In a sense, Tarr's behaviour and his manipulation of human conflict and emotional situations by the use of humour and laughter can be seen as an experimental study of the practical force of laughter in human relations -- the exploration in dramatic terms of the relative validity of Lewis's own claims concerning laughter as a dynamic force. The result of this use of laughter -- namely, the sort of emotional impotence or moral incompetence[9] which is typical of Tarr may then be seen as Lewis's suggestion about the results, in human terms, of the pursuit of the force of laughter as a _modus operandi_ on the human level. This point is reinforced if we study Lewis's comments on laughter in the essay "The Meaning of the Wild Body" _vis-à-vis_ his depiction of Tarr's use of humour in dealing with Bertha and Kreisler respectively. In this essay, Lewis claims:

> It is the chasm lying between non-being, over which it is impossible for logic to throw any bridge, that, in certain forms of laughter, we leap. We land plumb in the centre of Nothing.[10]

He adds:

> Again, it is comparatively easy to see that another man, as an animal, is absurd; but it is far more difficult to observe oneself in that hard and exquisite light. But no man has ever continued to live who has observed himself in that manner for longer than a flash. Such consciousness must be of the nature of a thunderbolt. Laughter is only summer-lightning. But it occasionally takes on the dangerous form of absolute revelation.[11]

Tarr's refusal to commit himself to the relationship with either Bertha or Anastasya, or, alternatively, to the choice of marrying Bertha out of his own individual and positive reasons, rather than out of ambivalent feelings disguised as charity, and similarly, his refusal to openly confront Kreisler in relation to Bertha[12] are all elements which prove his refusal to face the moral implications of conscious choice or conscious commitment to a line of action. Hence, it would be correct to define Tarr's sensibility as one of psychic impotence. Laughter is the medium in which this impotence is expressed.

Through his delineation of Tarr, Lewis presents us with a highly individualized study in the art of laughter.[13] That is, he offers us an examination of the use of laughter as mechanisms of offence and defense in human relations, and of the results, in psychic terms, of such use of laughter. Unlike the type of laughter described above by Lewis, Tarr's laughter contains no elements of insight or of revelation. It is merely an offensive defence mechanism, used to avoid confrontations with life, that is, with people. Tarr's laughter, and his use of it, is reminiscent of the laughter of the "Soldier of Humour," personified by Lewis as follows:

> I am a large blond clown, ever so vaguely reminiscent (in person) of William Blake, and some great american boxer whose name I forget. I have large strong teeth which I gnash and flash when I laugh. But usually a look of settled and aggressive naïveté rests on my face. I know much more about myself than people generally do. For instance I am aware that I am a barbarian. By rights I should be paddling about in a coracle. My body is large, white and savage. But all the fierceness has become transformed into *laughter*. It still looks like a visi-gothic fighting-machine, but it is in reality a *laughing* machine. *As I have remarked, when I laugh I gnash my teeth, which is another brutal survival and a thing laughter has taken over from war. Everywhere where formerly I would fly at throats, I now howl with laughter*. That is me.[14] (The italics are mine.)

Using laughter as a form of offense, as Lewis's "Soldier of Humour" does, Tarr is able to avoid any human interaction on an equal level with his fiancée or girlfriend, Bertha. Tarr is neither emotionally able to face the moral implications of a free choice of marriage to Bertha, nor is he able to face the moral choice of leaving her, and thereby freeing her from the emotional involvement with him. Laughter, then, is the medium in which he conceals his own emotional vacillations, his psychic impotence, just as "art," and his specious involvement in art, are the means by which he rationalizes his own major failure -- namely his failure to meet the challenge of constructively integrating his sexuality into a creative life. And it is clear that Tarr is not a creative person; rather, Lewis shows him to us in the role of boulevardier, of dilettante artist. We never see Tarr striving to create any artistic product (unlike, for instance, the less verbal or pseudo-sophisticated Victor Stamp in The Revenge for Love, who is depicted as struggling both to survive, to love, and to create[15]).

Just as Tarr's response to the problems of sexuality with Bertha is offensive laughter, his response to the demands of human interaction with others is the functional soliloquy, or monologue, as opposed to conversations or bilateral communication.[16] Lewis indicates this latter fact clearly in the following statement:

> A great many of Frederick Tarr's resolutions came from his conversation. It was a tribunal to which he brought his hesitations. An active and hustling spirit presided over this section of his life.[17]

Lewis makes plain, however, the fact that Tarr's use of humour to avoid equal human interaction, on the sexual level with Bertha is an expression of the negative and necrophilous tendency within himself, and that this refuge in laughter is an escape from the realities of life, with all the psychological ramifications which such escape implies:

> Tarr's idea of leisure recognized no departure from the tragic theme of existence. *Pleasure could take no form that did not include Death and corruption -- at present Bertha and humour*. Only he wished to play a little longer. It was the last chance he might have. *Work* was in front of him with Bertha.
>
> He was giving up *play*. But the giving up of play, even, had to take the form of play. He had seen in terms of sport so long that he had no other machinery to work with. *Sport might perhaps, for the fun of the thing, be induced to cast out sport*.[18] (The italics are mine.)

Obviously, Tarr regards as "work" the real challenge of the relationship with the opposite sex -- namely the challenge of creatively integrating the expression of our sexuality into the other aspects of life. The rejection of such efforts, implied by the negative tone of the word "work," is proof of Tarr's narcissism -- a quality which is usually linked to other necrophilous tendencies. It is in view of these implications of Lewis's that the following description of Tarr's use of laughter in his interaction -- or rather, in his *avoidance* of interaction -- with Bertha, must be seen:

> Tarr now saw at once what had happened. His good words had been lost, all except his confession to a weakness for the matronly blandishments of Matrimony. He had an access of stupid, brief, and blatant laughter.
>
> As people have wondered what was at the core of the world, basing their speculations on what deepest things occasionally emerge, with violence, at its holes, so Bertha often conjectured what might be at the heart of Tarr. Laughter was the most apparently central substance that, to her knowledge, had incontrollably appeared. She had often heard *grondements*, grumblings, quite literally, and seen unpleasant lights, belonging, she knew, to other categories of matter. But they never broke cover.
>
> At present this gaiety was interpreted as proof that she had been right. There was nothing in what he had said. It had been only one of his bad fits of rebellion.

> But laughter Tarr felt was retrogression. Laughter must be given up. He must in some way, for both their sakes, lay at once the foundations of an ending.
>
> For a few minutes he played with the idea of affecting her weapons. Perhaps it was not only impossible to overcome, but even to approach, or to be said to be on the same field with, this peculiar, without such uniformity of engines of attack or defence.[19] Should not he get himself a mask like hers at once, and follow suit with some emphatic sentence? He stared uncertainly at her. Then he sprang to his feet. He intended, as far as he could see beyond this passionate movement (for he must give himself up to the mood, of course) to pace the room. But his violence jerked out of him a shout of laughter. He went stamping about the floor roaring with reluctant mirth. It would not come out properly, too, except the first outburst.
>
> "Ay. That's right! Go on! Go on!" Bertha's patient irony seemed to gibe.
>
> This laughter left him vexed with himself, like a fit of tears. "Humour and pathos are such near twins, that Humour may be exactly described as the most feminine attribute of man, and the only one of which women show hardly any trace! Jokes are like snuff, a slatternly habit," said Tarr to Butcher once, "whereas tragedy (and tears) is like tobacco, much drier and cleaner. Comedy being always the embryo of Tragedy, the directer nature weeps. Women are of course directer than men. But they have not the same resources."[20]

In this passage, Lewis reveals the fact that Tarr's verbal and emotional incontinence are such that even laughter, supposedly his own game, eludes his control occasionally, as here, ironically redirecting his own arguments against himself.

Laughter, combined with arrogant sophistries, is, then, Tarr's weapon of self-defense against, and evasion from, the demands of human interaction. This sophistry is used similarly to rationalize his continued visits to Bertha, despite his ostensible desire to break with her, and to rationalize his refusal to take any action as regards her contacts with Kreisler, other than to take Kreisler on drinking trips. In short, Tarr continually acts in ways that are directly opposed to the intentions which he claims to have, or the responses which one might most logically expect as a result of his statements. All of these actions are negated or rendered full of a paradoxical meaning by his sophistry in rationalizing them. These facts, and Lewis's indication of them, reveal Tarr's psychic impotence, or his inability to cope directly with the demands of human interaction, that is, with life. Seen in the light of these claims, Tarr's casuistic rationalizations concerning his continued visits to Bertha, (or of his continued use of a studio near to her residence), his windy speculations about the relationship between Art and Life, his refusal to challenge the relationship between Kreisler and Bertha, and his "humorous" cultivation of Kreisler, are all aspects of a single trait in his character -- namely, his refusal, or inability, to deal directly or effectively with the emotional demands of human interaction and existence. These are all, in short, expressions of Tarr's psychic impotence. It will be interesting, therefore, to review those passages which provide clear expression of the fact that he is impotent within the web of his own lies.

First, Tarr's rationalizations of his continued visits to Bertha, and his continued proximity to her residence, are as follows:

> Not to go near Bertha was the negative programme for that particular day. To keep away was seldom easy. But ever since his conversation at the Berne he had been conscious of the absurd easiness of doing so, if he wished. He had not the least inclination to go to the Rue Martine! -- This sensation was so grateful that its object shared in its effect. He determined to go and see her. He wanted to enjoy his present feeling of indifference. Where best to enjoy it was no doubt where she was.
>
> As to the studio, he hesitated. A new situation was created by this new feeling of indifference. Its duration could not be gauged. -- He wished to stay in Paris just then to finish some paintings begun some months before. He substituted for the Impressionist's necessity to remain in front of the object being represented, a sensation of the desirability of finishing a canvas in the place where it was begun. He had an Impressionist's horror of change.
>
> So Tarr had evolved a plan. At first sight it was wicked. It was no blacker than most of his ingenuities. Bertha, as he had suggested to Butcher, he had in some lymphatic way, *dans la peau*.

> It appeared a matter of physical discomfort to leave her altogether. It must be done gradually. So he had thought that, instead of going away to England -- where the separation might cause him restlessness, he had perhaps better settle down in her neighbourhood. Through a series of specially tended ennuis, he would soon find himself in a position to depart. So the extreme nearness of the studio to Bertha's flat was only another inducement for him to take it. "If it were next door, so much the better!" he thought.
>
> Now for this famous feeling of indifference. Was there anything in it? -- The studio for the moment should be put aside. He would go to see Bertha. Let this visit solve this question.[21]

In this passage, Lewis makes clear the callousness and egocentricity with which Tarr rationalizes his feelings -- or lack of feelings -- for Bertha. This callousness is only equalled by the arrogance with which he rationalizes his relationship with her, and with which he assesses women in general, in conversation with, or rather, in monologue to, Butcher:

> "She's a very good sort. You know, she is phenomenally kind. It's not quite so absurd as you think, my question as to whether I should marry her. Her love is quite beyond question."
>
> Butcher listened with a slight rolling of the eyes, which was a soft equivalent for grinding his teeth.
>
> Tarr proceeded:
>
> "She has a nice healthy penchant for self-immolation; not, unfortunately, directed by any considerable tact or discretion. She is apt to lie down on the altar at the wrong moment -- even to mistake all sorts of unrelated things for altars. She once lay down on the pavement of the Boulevard Sebastopol, and continued to lie there heroically till, with the help of an agent, I bundled her into a cab. She is genial and fond of a gross pleasantry, very near to 'the people ' -- le peuple, as she says, purringly and pityingly. All individuals who have class marked on them strongly resemble each other. A typical duchess is much more like a typical nurserymaid than she is like anybody not standardized to the same extent. So is Bertha, a bourgeoise, or rather bourgeois-Bohemian, reminiscent of the popular maiden."
>
> Tarr relighted his cigarette.
>
> "She is full of good sense. -- She is a high standard Aryan female, in good condition, superbly made; of the succulent, obedient, clear, peasant type. It is natural that in my healthy youth, living in these Bohemian wastes, I should catch fire. But that is not the whole of the picture. She is unfortunately not a peasant. She has German culture, and a florid philosophy of love. -- She is an art-student. -- She is absurd."
>
> Tarr struck a match for his cigarette.

> "You would ask them how it is that I am still there? The peasant-girl -- if such it were -- would not hold you for ever; even less so the spoiled peasant. -- But that's where the mischief lies. -- That bourgeois, spoiled, ridiculous element was the trap. I was innocently depraved enough to find it irresistible. It had the charm of a vulgar wall-paper, a gimcrack ornament. A cosy banality set in the midst of a rough life. Youthful exoticism has done it, the something different from oneself."[22]

Clearly, Lewis is indicating the complete arrogance and conceit which underlie Tarr's attitude towards his relationship with Bertha. That these qualities are a judgement on himself, rather than on Bertha, should be plain to the reader.

Worth considering, also, is the possibility that the compulsion to rationalize one's sexuality in such arrogant and negative terms must be allied with grave doubts as to the overall value of such sexuality. This possibility, and the questions concerning the true nature of Tarr's sexuality which it raises, are contingent on Lewis's examinations of all of Tarr's rationalizations. Lewis reinforces this point in the unbearably sexist and hostile content of Tarr's continued monologue:

> "My romance, you see, is exactly inverse to yours," Tarr proceeded. "But pure unadulterated romanticism with me is in about the same rudimentary state as sex. So they had perhaps better keep together? I only allow myself to philander with little things. I have succeeded in shunting our noxious illusionism away from the great spaces and ambitions. I have billeted it with a bourgeoise in a villa. These things are all arranged above our heads. They are no doubt self-protective. The whole of a man's ninety-nine per cent of obscurer mechanism is daily engaged in organizing his life in accordance with his deepest necessity. Each person boasts some notable invention of personal application only.
>
> "So there I am fixed with my bourgeoise in my skin, dans ma peau. What is the next step? The body is the main thing. -- But I think I have made a discovery. In sex I am romantic and arriéré. It would be healthier for all sex to be so. But that is another matter. Well, I cannot see myself attracted by an exceptional woman -- 'spiritual' woman -- 'noble soul,' or even a particularly refined

> and witty animal. -- I do not understand attraction for such beings. -- Their existence appears to me quite natural and proper, *but, not being as fine as men; not being as fine as pictures or poems; not being as fine as housewives or classical Mothers of Men; they appear to me to occupy an unfortunate position on this earth. No man properly demarcated as I am will have much to do with them*. They are very beautiful to look at. But they are unfortunately alive, and usually cats. If you married one of them, out of pity, you would have to support the eternal grin of a Gioconda fixed complacently on you at all hours of the day, the pretensions of a piece of canvas that had sold for thirty thousand pounds. You could not put your foot through the canvas without being hanged. You would not be able to sell it yourself for that figure, and so get some little compensation. *Tout au plus*, if the sentimental grin would not otherwise come off, you could break its jaw, perhaps."[24]

Secondly, Lewis presents us with Tarr's elaborate casuistries on the supposed dichotomy between art and life. This long rationalization is presented in the form of yet another of Tarr's non-conversations, or, this time in the presence -- clearly only incidental as this is to Tarr -- of Hobson. As a result of the ironic perspective created by the unique mechanism of Lewisian satire, Lewis makes Tarr's own words the worst judgement on himself, and his revelation of his own personality the most damaging evidence against himself. (It is this method of satiric insight and dimension which typifies Lewis's use of satire in this novel and elsewhere in his work; this kind of insight, too, lends to Tarr's monologues the complex element of apparently unconscious self-revelation. These qualities, in turn, give to the novel the immediacy and urgency in the examination of the male-female relationship which transform such examination into important psychological analysis.) Thus, Tarr intones, with abundant narcissism:

> "But we're talking at cross purposes, Hobson. -- You think I am contending that affection for *a dolt, like my fiancée*, is in some way a merit. I do not mean that. Also, I do not mean that sex is my tragedy, but art. -- I will explain why I am associated sexually with *this pumpkin*. First, I am an artist. -- With most people, not describable as artists, all the finer part of their vitality goes into

> sex. They become third-rate poets during their courtship. All their instincts of drama come out freshly with their wives. *The artist is he in whom this emotionality normally absorbed by sex is so strong that it claims a newer and more exclusive field of deployment. -- Its first creation is the Artist himself, a new sort of person; the creative man. But for the first-rate poet, nothing short of a Queen or a Chimera is adequate for the powers of his praise*. -- And so on all through the bunch of his gifts. One by one his powers and *moyens* are turned away from the usual object of a man's poetry, and turned away from the immediate world. *One solitary thing is left facing a woman.* -- *That is his sex, a lonely phallus*.[25] -- Things are not quite so simple in actual fact as this. Some artists are less complete than others. More or less remains to the man. -- Then the character of the artist's creation comes in. What tendency has my work as an artist, a ready instance? You may have noticed that it has that of an invariable severity. *Apart from its being good or bad, its character is ascetic rather than sensuous, and divorced from immediate life. There is no slop of sex in that*.[26] But there is no severity left over for the work of *the cruder senses* either.[27] Very often with an artist whose work is very sensuous or human, his sex instinct, if it is active, will be more discriminating than he in his work. To sum up this part of my disclosure. -- No one could have a *coarser, more foolish, slovenly taste than I have in women*.[28] It is not even sluttish and abject, of the J.W.M. Turner type, with his washerwoman at Gravesend. -- It is bourgeois, banal, pretty-pretty, a cross between the Musical Comedy stage and the ideal of the Eighteenth-Century gallant. *All the delicate psychology another man naturally seeks in a woman, the curiosity of form, windows on other lives, love and passion, I seek in my work and not elsewhere. -- Form would perhaps be thickened by child-bearing; it would perhaps be damaged by harlotry. -- Why should sex still be active*?[29] That is a matter of heredity that has nothing to do with the general energies of the mind. I see I am boring you. -- The matter is too remote! -- But you have trespassed here, and you must listen. -- I cannot let you off before you have heard, and shown that you understand. -- If you do not sit and listen, I will write it all to you. YOU WILL BE MADE TO HEAR IT! -- And *after* I have told you this, I will tell you why I am talking to a fool like you!"[30]
> (The italics are mine.)

Obviously, Tarr dislikes and scorns women in general, and Bertha, his fiancée, in particular, regarding them all as unworthy objects of man's desires. However, his strictures against unusually outstanding, gifted or beautiful women does not leave room even for male patronage of *them*; these strictures, repeated as regards Anastasya,[31] emerge as only the disguise behind which he hides his basic fear of women, combined as this is with a paradoxical need of them. Tarr may not like women, and may be completely incapable of loving any woman, but he needs women -- especially those whom he can successfully patronize or disparage -- because of the ego reinforcement he obtains thereby. This parasitism of Tarr's at the expense of women, a parasitism typical of the necrophilous, mother-dominated, male personality, explains his repeated denigrations of women, which might otherwise seem gratuitous, as in the following examples:

> "Think of all the collages, marriages, and liaisons that you know, in which some frowsy or foolish or doll-like or log-like bitch accompanies the form of an otherwise sensible man: a dumbfounding, disgusting, and septic ghost!
>
> "How foul and wrong this haunting of women is! -- They are everywhere! -- Confusing, blurring, libelling, with their half-baked, gushing, tawdry presences! It is like a slop of children and the bawling machinery of the inside of life, always and all over our palaces. Their silly food of cheap illusion comes in between friendships, stagnates complacently around a softened mind.
>
> "I might almost take some credit to myself for at least having the grace to keep this beer-garden in the background."[32]

Here, the strongly negative words which Tarr uses to refer to women indicate beyond any doubt the revulsion, pure and undiluted, which he feels concerning the opposite sex. Only the habit of ego-reinforcement at the expense of women can explain a continuation of relationships with them if they inspire such revulsion, and violent scorn in a man. This habit of ego-reinforcement through their denigration is combined with a feeling of compulsion to interact with women, accompanied by a feeling of guilt about this compulsion. All of these conflicting emotions concerning women can be seen as contributing to a model of a particular type of male sexuality -- the mother-fixated, narcissistic, necrophilous, personality, which often constitutes the psyche of the homosexual, or latently homosexual man. (As we know that positive action in one direction or another is not

Tarr's forte, it is most logical to assume that Tarr will never be wholly or positively anything, not even in the perversion of his sexuality. It is safe to question whether in Tarr, then, Lewis is presenting us with the model of the latent homosexual.)[33] Thus, Lewis's delineation of Tarr's fear of woman as a possible physical or intellectual equal (as represented by Anastasya), is revealed in his rationalizations concerning the possibly female origins of all life, and, by extension, of what would be to Tarr the most fearful possibility of all, the potential for androgynous personality in all life. These rationalizations reveal Tarr's arrogance, his sexism and his conceit as being the near-hysterical camouflage for his abiding fear and dread of the female, at all levels, and in all forms. Consider the following passage:

> He came back to his earlier conclusions. Such successful people as Anastasya and himself were by themselves. It was as impossible to combine or wed them as to compound the genius of two great artists. If you mixed together into one whole Gainsborough and Goya you would get nothing, for they would be mutually destructive. Beyond a certain point of perfection individual instinct was its own law. A subtle lyrical wail would gain nothing from living with a rough and powerful talent, or vice versa. Success is always personal. Co-operation, group-genius, was, he was convinced, a slavish pretence and absurdity. Only when the group was so big that it became a person again, as with a nation, did you get mob-talent or popular art. This big, diffuse, vehement giant was the next best thing to the great artist; Patchin Tcherana coming just below.
>
> He saw this quite clearly. He and Anastasya were a superfluity, and destructive conflict. It was like a mother being given a child to bear the same size already as herself. Anastasya was in every way too big; she was too big physically. But did not sex change the whole question, when it was a woman?[34] He did not agree to this. Woman and the sexual sphere seemed to him to be an average from which everything came: from it everything rose, or attempted to rise. There was no mysterious opposition extending up into Heaven, and dividing Heavenly Beings into Gods and Goddesses. There was only one God, and he was a man. A woman was a lower form of life. Everything was female to begin with. A jellyish diffuseness spread itself and gaped on the beds and the bas-fonds of everything. Above a certain level of life sex disappeared, just as in highly organized sensualism sex vanishes. And,

> on the other hand, *everything* beneath that line was female. Bard, Simpson, Mackenzie, Townsend, Annandale -- he enumerated acquaintances evidently below the absolute line, and who displayed a lack of energy, permanently mesmeric state, and almost purely emotional reactions. He knew that everything on the superior side of that line was not purged of jellyish attributes; also that Anastasya's flaccid and fundamental charms were formidable, although the line had been crossed by her. One thing was impressive, however. The loss of Anastasya did not worry him, except magnified through the legal acquisition of Bertha. What did he *want*? Well, he did not want Anastasya *as much as he should*. He was incorrigible, he concluded. He regarded the Anastasya evening as a sort of personal defeat even. The call of duty was nevertheless very strong. He *ought* to love Anastasya; and his present intentions as regards his despicable fiancee were a disgraceful betrayal, etc. etc. The mutterings of reason continued.35

In a similar way, Lewis reveals Tarr's inability to cope with, or to relate to, a woman as an equal (such equal relationship being the real challenge which Anastasya represents), in the following description of his fluctuating reactions to Anastasya:

> That evening Tarr met Anastasya. The moment he saw her he realized the abysses of indignity and poorness he was flinging himself into with Bertha Lunken. A sudden humbleness entered him and put him out of conceit with his judgment, formed away from bright objects like Anastasya. The selfishness that caused his sentimentality when alone with Bertha was dissipated or not used in presence of more or less successful objects and people. *None of his ego was required by his new woman. She possessed plenty of her own. This, he realized later, was the cause of his lack of attachment. He needed an empty vessel to flood with his vitality, and not an equal and foreign vitality to exist side by side with coldly. He had taken into sex the procédés and selfish arrangements of life in general*. He had humanized sex too much. He frequently admitted this, but with his defence lost sight of the permanent fact.36 (The italics are mine.)

Because Tarr cannot and does not relate to women as equals, he cannot really relate to Anastasya, while his interaction with Bertha is simply another form of non-relating, or patronage. Certainly, he will therefore fear a woman who seems to have enough ego of her own, not to need his patronage; certainly, he would regard such an equal relationship as "existing side by side," "*coldly*," as he certainly could not face, or even contemplate, coping with such a relationship on equal terms. In such passages as this, Lewis fully exposes the full extent of Tarr's narcissism, which is basic to his over-riding incapacity for psychic or moral commitment. In turn, Lewis mobilizes this incapacity on Tarr's part as the catalytic factor in the closely-woven pattern of human interaction which constitutes the plot of the novel. Tarr's psychic impotence and his narcissism as well as the necrophilous tendencies concealed in his creation of the art-versus-life dichotomy are parallelled by Kreisler's violent narcissism, his more obvious necrophilous orientation, and the overriding indifference with which he exploits both men and women. In the spurious commitment to the mere idea of art (really a camouflage for his inability to cope with the psychological and androgynously human ramifications of his own sexuality),[37] Lewis satirically exposes Tarr as the dilettante who merely rationalizes his own incapacity for moral and psychic commitment to people -- a commitment which the novel shows, by extension, is essential to "life." Tarr's alibi is a specious involvement in "art," while Kreisler's alibi is an ostensible involvement with women. "But, obviously, art is a part of Life!" seems to be Lewis's laughing answer to both of his puppets. In this novel, then, we may see Lewis presenting us with a conscious satirizing[38] of the artist as psychic impotent, just as elsewhere, in another satirical novel, Snooty Baronet, we are introduced to the figure of the writer as psychic psychopath.

Tarr and Kreisler

In those pages[39] where he describes the developing contact between Tarr and Kreisler, which results from Kreisler's destructive attentions to Bertha after Tarr's tortuous rejection of her, Lewis shows us a new perspective in the study of male sexuality, which he offers us through the depiction of both Tarr and Kreisler. The strangely ambiguous relationship which develops between Tarr and Kreisler, resulting symbolically from both their contacts with a single woman, Bertha (and this fact is significant), reveals not merely another example of Tarr's psychic non-commitment to Bertha, but, more importantly, a new dimension of Tarr's sexuality. This relationship, however briefly handled by Lewis, is one of the most illuminating interactions among all the cycles of interaction portrayed in the novel. Brought together by their mutual interest in a woman whom they both share sexually, they act upon, and illuminate each other's personalities and consciousness, in ambiguous and dynamic ways. Through his depiction of this relationship, Lewis indicates the ambiguity or ambivalence of the sexual potential of both men -- a revelation which vastly complicates and diversifies the type of psycho-sexual analysis which Lewis pursues in this novel and elsewhere.

In one of those moments of insight or "detachment" which Lewis discusses when he attempts to establish a dichotomy between "The Wild Body" and the "laughing observer,"[40] Bertha recognizes the nature of the complex relationship in which she is involved as loser:

> Their [Tarr's and Bertha's] grand, never-to-be forgotten friendship was ending in shabby shallows. Tarr had the best role, and did not deserve it. Kreisler was the implacable remote creditor of the situation.[41]

"The situation" is the sexual triangle which results from the fact that, as a result of Tarr's hostility towards, and rejection of, her, allied with his customary vacillations about taking steps to make this rejection firm and permanent (that is, undertaking the moral responsibility of the final decision to make and maintain the break in their relationship), Bertha has unwisely flirted with Kreisler. Kreisler, in turn, has taken advantage of her naiveté and vulnerability, and has raped her.[42] What had been, on Bertha's part, a foolishly romantic, self-immolative gesture -- by flirting with Kreisler, she would free Tarr, who wanted to be free, but was not strong enough to free himself, is the logic of this gesture[43] -- Bertha has put herself in a most invidious situation for a woman. Kreisler, then, has merely taken an unfair advantage of the situation, showing himself to be as much a predator on the emotional and sexual levels as we have seen him on the social and pecuniary levels. (Thus the extreme aptness of Lewis's choice of metaphor, in describing Kreisler as the "implacable remote creditor of the situation.")[44] "The situation" has become all the more complicated for Bertha when Tarr returns from his brief desertion of her, obviously determined, as he plots to himself, to "behave en maître," so that "there would be no further question of his having given her up and renounced his rights"; without the slightest compunctions about the utter inconsistency of his actions, Tarr plans to "behave just as though he had never gone away or the letters been sent"; coldbloodedly, he intends to "claim her again with all the appeals he knew to her love for him."[45] He does not bargain on the violent intervention of Kreisler on his game.

When he finds Kreisler a part of the scene with Bertha on his return, Tarr, again undergoing another petulant change of mind, reverts to his plan to abandon the relationship with Bertha, but this time decides to do so by immersing himself in contact with her and her milieu -- which now includes Kreisler. This plan is totally unrealistic, and totally narcissistic; in fact, the extent of its shortsightedness is, of course, to be measured in terms of its amazing narcissism. Thus, Tarr visits the Lipmann circle of pseudo-intellectual women, with whom Bertha had once consorted; thus, also, he visits Kreisler; by these visits, he imagines that he is enjoying "a diffused form of Bertha."[46] In his completely narcissistic dehumanization of others (here, Bertha), he operates as if it were possible to immunize himself against her by such saturation of himself in the memory and evocation of her through contact with those with whom she has contact. Thus, also, he rationalizes his reasons for seeking out Kreisler:

> On leaving, Tarr no longer felt that he would come back to enjoy a diffused form of Bertha there. The prolongations of his Bertha period had passed a climax.
>
> On leaving Renée Lipmann's, nevertheless, Tarr went to the Café de l'Aigle, some distance away, *but with an object*. To make his present frequentation quite complete, it only needed Kreisler. Otto was there, *very much on his present visiting list*. He visited him regularly at the Café de l'Aigle, where he was constantly to be found.
>
> This is how Tarr had got to know him.[47] (The italics are mine.)

Tarr's decision to cultivate Kreisler's company is an example of the extreme nature of his narcissism, and the blind disregard for the reality of others which accompanies it; Lewis makes this clear, in the following passage, where Tarr's egotism or narcissism are shown as transcending the real demarcations of personal differentiation, and where he identifies himself with Bertha, and where, in a highly neurotic fashion, he sees himself as identified with the other, so encompassing is his self-centredness:

> The causes at the root of Tarr's present thrusting of himself upon Kreisler were the same as his later visits at the Lipmann's. A sort of bath of Germans was his prescription for himself, a voluptuous immersion. To heighten the effect, he was being German himself: *being Bertha as well*.[48] (The italics are mine.)

Here, by some sort of psychic transference, by some form of narcissistic identification, Tarr feels that he has *become* Bertha; but if he has become Bertha, *he has then also become that woman who consorts with Kreisler*. The implications in terms of Tarr's subconscious psycho-sexuality (and latent homosexuality) are obvious here; once again, they lead us to the possibility that, through his depiction of this ambiguous relationship, Lewis is making a double-edged statement about a certain type of male sexuality.

Latent homosexuality -- and active "homosocial" behaviour patterns -- seem to comprise the underlying dynamic behind the Tarr/ Kreisler tryst. Certain salient ingredients of the relationship seem to suggest as much. First, is the fact that both men actually share sexual knowledge of a single woman (Bertha), who is the ostensible motive which Tarr ascribes to himself for his pursuit of Kreisler. Second, comes the fact that both men again share a latent interest in yet another woman (Anastasya), which represents yet another common bond of sexual interest. Next comes the fact that both men build easily a false camaraderie at the expense of women -- that is, by mutual denigration of Bertha. Finally, comes the fact that, by an ostensible undercutting of the rival, the force of the woman's attraction is also undercut, since she is dehumanized by their mutual rivalry for her into a tarnished prize or sexual object; disguised within this process of undercutting and rivalry is an identification with the rival as a means of contact which transcends heterosexual interest. These seem to be the factors which form the dynamic foundations of the Kreisler/Tarr interaction, and in turn define the nature of this contact. The violence[49] with which this relationship is terminated is not surprising, therefore, as the resentments which underlie it are crucially related to factors which are more deepseated than simple all-male rivalry. In view of these claims, it will be useful to trace those instances which seem to us to reveal the direction which we have noted with regard to this relationship.

To reconstruct the relationship, therefore, we should note the following factors: Tarr returns to his rejected love, intending to re-claim her, and once again demand her love. He finds Kreisler in a position which seems to indicate the fact that there is some sort of bond between Bertha and himself. Rather than challenge Kreisler's right to her, and by so doing, make a statement about his own desires, Tarr instead rationalizes his apparently surprising decision to cultivate Kreisler's company instead. The relationship then quickly develops along the lines of the "bull-session," which includes the necessary denigration of the woman who, in this case, is a woman whom both men actually share as a sexual object. Sharing the false camaraderie of liquor, and of their shared lack of respect for womanhood and sexuality as a whole, both men play a game of cat-and-mouse, at the expense of women in general, and of Bertha in particular.

First, they discuss women of a particular nationality, Tarr likening English-women (with the use of a telling smile, evoking consumption) to "languid nectarines."[50] Then, Tarr comes to the real point of the discussion, Bertha:

> "What do you find particularly attractive about Bertha?" Tarr asked in a discursive way. "I ask you as a German. I have often wondered what a German would think of her."[51]
>
> Kreisler looked at him with resentful uncertainty for a moment.
>
> "You want to know what I think of the Lunken? -- She's a sly prostitute, that's what she is!" he announced loudly and challengingly.
>
> "Ah!"
>
> When he had given Tarr time for any possible demonstration, he thawed into his sociable self. He then added:
>
> "She's not a bad girl! But she tricked you, my friend! She never cared that" -- he snapped his fingers inexpertly -- "for you! She told me so!"
>
> "Really? That's interesting. -- But I expect you're only telling lies. All Germans do!"[52]

Obviously, Tarr feels no obligation to defend Bertha's honour against Kreisler's obscenities; obviously not, for to do so would be to involve himself, to make some statement about his own feelings for her. Doing this would indicate some moral or emotional commitment on his part; and Tarr is determined to reject the possibility for such commitment within himself. Thus, mutual denigration of the character of the female whom they both share is the basis for their conversation, and for their continued communication. Therefore, after a digression on race, Tarr again presses the subject of Bertha. It is important to note that it is he and not Kreisler who returns to the subject of Bertha, which has already proved to be the occasion of Kreisler's hostility, obscenity and lies. (One cannot help wondering if Tarr really feels that Kreisler's (a stranger's) opinion of this woman whom he has known for so long himself is important. If so, we must ask why. The answer to this question again lies within the secret of Tarr's sexuality, and the real content of the contact which he pursues with Kreisler.) Thus, Tarr again brings up Bertha's name, despite the malignity of Kreisler's earlier response:

> "You haven't yet given me your opinion of Bertha. You permitted yourself a truculent flourish that evaded the question."
>
> "I wish to evade the question. -- I told you that she has tricked you. She is very malin! She is tricking me now; or she is trying to. She will not succeed with me! 'When you go to take a woman you should be careful not to forget your whip!' That Nietzsche said too!"
>
> "Are you going to give her a beating?" Tarr asked.
>
> Kreisler laughed in a ferocious and ironical manner.
>
> "You consider that you are being fooled, in some way, by Fraulein Lunken?"
>
> "She would if she could. She is nothing but deceit. She is a snake. Pfui!"
>
> "You consider her a very cunning and double-faced woman?"
>
> Kreisler nodded sulkily.
>
> "With the soul of a prostitute?"
>
> "She has an innocent face, like a Madonna. But she is a prostitute. I have the proofs of it!"
>
> "In what way has she tricked me?"
>
> "In the way that women always trick men!"[53]

Here, Tarr pursues his questions concerning Bertha, even putting words into Kreisler's mouth concerning her. Never once does he ask Kreisler to substantiate or prove his accusations against Bertha's character. Instead, in typically narcissistic fashion he investigates the topic from his own point of view -- he is anxious to know whether and how (in Kreisler's opinion), Bertha has deceived or tricked him. Thus his narcissism replaces what one might have expected as a more natural response of defending of her character, since this, after all, is a woman with whom he has shared freely a very intimate and longstanding relationship. Similarly, Kreisler's violent and obscene responses correspond, on the necrophilous, mysogenous and sadistic levels, to Tarr's over-riding narcissism. Thus, the shared sex object becomes the shared object of scorn. Thus, the common bond of disdain replaces rivalry, and, at the expense of the woman, they are united in a closer alliance of male malice and misogeny. (In short, they merely use Bertha to make contact with each other.) This identification and union with the rival or the ostensible rival would seem highly puzzling, unless we interpret it as another manifestation which Lewis affords us of the possibility or potential for a latently homo-sexual bond underlying the seemingly all-male contact between Tarr and Kreisler.

Kreisler

Some of Lewis's critics, for example, Rebecca West, have regarded Kreisler as one of Lewis's major characters, as the "real achievement of the book."[54] Comparisons between the characterizations of Tarr and Kreisler often seem short sighted, too often based on an inadequate appreciation of the force of satire as one of the formal and formative elements involved in the delineation and understanding of the character of Tarr.[55] Certainly, he is one of Lewis's most chilling etchings of the psychosexually dangerous personality, the violent and death-oriented or necrophilous narcissist. However, comparisons between the characterizations of Tarr and Kreisler which seek to pit the two characterizations against one another, for purposes of contrast seem to be missing the point -- namely, the possibility that these two characters, however differently portrayed from a formal point of view, are more alike than they are different.

In fact, it seems that these two characters, evoked by formally different methods of characterization, may in fact be most usefully seen as extensions of each other, as revealing the two sides of the same psychological or psychopathological coin. If we see these characters as representing a psychic complement to each other, then we may see Lewis as presenting, through them, the two extremities within the same pattern of inner or psychic underdevelopment -- Tarr representing the necrophilous narcissist, and Kreisler the narcissistic necrophiliac. In this sense, they are complements, a method of characterization by which Lewis projects a unified, if double-edged, picture of a single and particular type of psycho-sexuality.

Both men act upon, and avoid relating to, the same woman, in different, yet paradoxically similar ways. On the one hand, Tarr uses laughter to avoid any equal human interaction with Bertha, and his laughter represents his refusal to recognize her as anything other than the "dumb ox";[56] on the other hand, Kreisler rapes her. However, it seems that Tarr's psychic assault is, in the final analysis, no less brutal than the physical assault which Kreisler makes on her. Kreisler, being more necrophilously oriented, never uses laughter, as humour is not his medium; violence is, so he violates her womanhood, lethally reducing her to a mere sexual object. Tarr, alternately, heads for the psyche.[57] Who can decide which of these two assaults is more damaging to Bertha on the female and on the human levels?[58] Or is Lewis suggesting, through his characterization of Bertha, Tarr and Kreisler, that these seemingly different types of assault are merely two different aspects of the same basic hostility, two different manifestations of the same psychic condition? In context of claims we have already made concerning Kreisler's and Tarr's shared psychopathology and ambivalent psychosexuality, pursuing such speculation seems rather like begging the question.

We have described Kreisler as a "narcissistic necrophiliac" -- a type which should be further elucidated. Eric Fromm defines this personality type in his work *The Heart of Man*,[59] in a number of explications, one of which is an extended reference, as follows:

> I do not know of a better introduction to the heart of the problem of necrophilia than a short statement made by the Spanish philosopher Unamuno in 1936. The occasion was a speech by General Millan Astray at the University of Salamanca, whose rector Unamuno was at the time of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The General's favorite motto was "Viva la muerte!" (Long Live Death!), and one of his followers shouted it from the back of the hall. When the general had finished his speech Unamuno rose and said:
>
> ". . . Just now I heard a necrophilous and senseless cry: "Long live death!" And I, who have spent my life shaping paradoxes which have aroused the uncomprehending anger of others, I must tell you, as an expert authority, that this outlandish paradox is repellent to me. General Millan Astray is a cripple. Let it be said without any slighting undertone. He is a war invalid. So was Cervantes. Unfortunately there are too many cripples in Spain just now. And soon there will be even more of them if God does not come to our aid. It pains me to think that General Millan Astray should dictate the pattern of mass psychology. A cripple who lacks the spiritual greatness of a Cervantes is wont to seek ominous relief in causing mutilation around him." At this Millan Astray was unable to restrain himself any longer. "Abajo la inteligencia!" (Down with intelligence!") he shouted. "Long live death!" There was a clamor of support for this remark from the Falangists. But Unamuno went on: "This is the temple of the intellect. And I am its high priest. It is you who profane its sacred precints. You will win, because you have more than enough brute force. But you will not convince. For to convince you need to persuade. And in order to persuade you would need what you lack: Reason and Right in the struggle. I consider it futile to exhort you to think of Spain. I have done."[60] (The italics are mine.)

Further, Fromm defines the necrophilous syndrome in the following statements:

> There is no more fundamental distinction between men, psychologically and morally, than the one between those who love death and those who love life, between the *necrophilous* and the *biophilous*.[61]

> Literally, "necrophilia" means "love of the dead" (as "Biophilia" means "love of life"). The term is customarily used to denote a sexual perversion, namely the desire to possess the dead body (of a woman) for purposes of sexual intercourse, or a morbid desire to be in the presence of a dead body. *But, as is often the case, a sexual*

> *perversion presents only the more overt and clear picture of an orientation which is to be found without sexual admixture in many people*. Unamuno saw this clearly when he applied the word "necrophilous" to the General's speech. He did not imply that the General was obsessed with a sexual perversion, but that he hated life and loved death.[62] (The italics are mine.)

> The necrophilous dwell in the past, never in the future. Their feelings are essentially sentimental, that is, they nurse the memory of feelings which they had yesterday -- or believe that they had. They are cold, distant, devotees of "law and order." Their values are precisely the reverse of the values we connect with normal life: not life, but death excites and satisfies them.
>
> Characteristic for the necrophile is his attitude toward force. *Force is, to quote Simone Weil's definition, the capacity to transform a man*[63] *into a corpse*. Just as sexuality can create life, force can destroy it. All force is, in the last analysis, based on the power to kill. I may not kill a person but only deprive him of his freedom; I may want only to humiliate him or to take away his possessions -- but whatever I do, behind all these actions stands my capacity to kill and my willingness to kill. The lover of death necessarily loves force. For him the greatest achievement of man is not to give life, but to destroy it; the use of force is not a transitory action forced upon him by circumstances -- it is a way of life.
>
> This explains why the necrophile is truly enamored of force. Just as for the lover of life the fundamental polarity in man is that between male and female, for the necrophile there exists another and very different polarity: that between those who have the power to kill and those who lack this power. For him there are only two "sexes": the powerful and the powerless; the killers and the killed. He is in love with the killers and despises those who are killed.[64] (The italics are mine.)

Fromm adds:

> While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. All living processes, feelings, and thoughts are transformed into things. Memory, rather than experience; having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object -- a flower or a person -- only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses possession he loses contact with the world. That is why we find the paradoxical reaction that he would rather lose life than possession, even though by losing life he who possesses has ceased to exist. He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life. He is deeply afraid of life, because it is disorderly and uncontrollable by its very nature.[65]

In summation, Fromm states:

> Necrophilia constitutes a fundamental orientation; it is the one answer to life which is in complete opposition to life; it is the most morbid and the most dangerous among the orientations to life of which man is capable. It is the true perversion: while being alive, not life but death is loved; not growth but destruction. The necrophilous person, if he dares to be aware of what he feels, expresses the motto of his life when he says, "Long live death!"[66]

These remarks of Fromm's sketch, in skeletal form, a personality type which is not unconnected, in many ways, we feel, with either the character of Tarr or that of Kreisler. We have labelled Tarr a "necrophilous narcissist," and Kreisler a "narcissistic necrophiliac." Logically enough, the extent to which each partakes in either a necrophilous or narcissistic orientation will vary in terms of the different degrees in which each responds to violence (representing the death orientation), and the labyrinth of the ego (representing the narcissistic orientation). Clearly, both share the same basic level of narcissism,[67] as their shared indifference to other human beings proves. This indifference ranges from the arrogant invective which replaces communication in Tarr's case, to the blank passivity or apparent apathy which shrouds Kreisler's attitude to, and approach to, others. Kreisler's passivity is deceptive, however. It merely hides the basically predatory nature of his approach to others. (Kreisler is a perennial money-borrower.) Thus, communication as a mode of equal human interaction is understood by neither Tarr nor Kreisler. However, Tarr's superior financial stability fortuitously saves him from the complete social isolation which becomes Kreisler's. This irony should not disguise the fact, however, that Lewis shows both of these figures as sharing an equally narcissistic incapacity to relate to their fellow human beings. This narcissism is arrogantly verbalized by Tarr; it forms the texture of Kreisler's cold predatoriness, which causes him to vacillate between self-consuming apathy, through defiant masochism, to violence and brutality. This narcissism is also the crux of their mutual indifference to, and incapacity for, full or equal relationships with the opposite sex. Of Kreisler, Lewis clearly tells us:

> Kreisler's one great optimism was a belief in the efficacy of women. -- You did not deliberately go there -- at least, he usually did not -- unless you were in straits. But there they were all the time, vast dumping-ground for sorrow and affliction -- a world-dimensioned pawnshop, in which you could deposit not only your dress-suit or garments, but yourself, temporarily, in exchange for the gold of the human heart. Their hope consisted, no doubt, in the reasonable uncertainty as to whether you would ever be able to take yourself out again. Kreisler had got in and out again almost as many times as his "smokkin" in its pawnshop.
>
> Women were Art or expression for him in this way. They were Man's Theatre. The Tragedies played there purged you periodically of the too violent accumulations of desperate life. There its burden of laughter as well might be exploded.[68] (The italics are mine.)

The first characteristic of Kreisler's manner of "relating" to other people is his predatoriness on the pecuniary level; the first characteristic of his manner of "relating" to women is his use of them as solace, refuge, or as resource, whether actual, sexual, or emotional or psychic. For Kreisler, the value of his male contacts is their worth as financial resource (as in the case of his dependence on Volker), while the value of women to him is in their role as psychic resource -- "vast dumping-ground for sorrow and affliction."[69] In no real sense can he be said to fully "relate" to either men or women -- with the exception of Volker, perhaps. Lewis indicates the possibility for this exception, and the true nature of Kreisler's response to Volker, in the following remark:

> *Since knowing Volker, no woman had come conspicuously to disturb him. Volker had been the ideal element of balance in his life.*
>
> But between this state -- the minimum degree of friendship possible -- a distant and soothing companionship -- and more serious states, there was no possible foothold for Kreisler.
>
> Friendship usually dates from unformed years. But Love still remains in full swing long after Kreisler's age at that time; a sort of spurious and intense friendship.[70] (The italics are mine.)

Thus, if we may compare Kreisler's use of women for the filling of a need for mothering (emotional succour), then his use of Volker is for the filling of a need for fathering (material succour). Significantly, when such material succour is provided by Volker over a period of time, Lewis attests, no woman can "come conspicuously to disturb him."[71] Significantly, also, both of these methods of response on Kreisler's part emanate from a similar narcissistic source, and are in no way representative of a tendency towards egalitarian, *bilateral*, adult or mature interaction.

This absence of egalitarianism, particularly marked in their shared attitudes towards women, is one of the most striking similarities in the characters of Tarr and Kreisler, as delineated by Lewis. In Tarr, this inability to admit to equality manifests itself toward women as a hidden fear of them, disguised in arrogant rationalizations, and promiscuity. In Kreisler, this void expresses itself in a brutal hatred of them, which may be expressed in a sickening masochistic adulation, (as regards Anastasya), or in brutal violence (as regards Bertha). These factors are revealed not only in the manner in which each of these men responds to, and approaches, women, but also (and equally revealingly), in the metaphor which each chooses to express his feelings about these women. Tarr, on the one hand, must rationalize even his simplest desire to be near to

Bertha,[72] and must find highly intellectual alibis for his continued sexual involvement with her, which prove that he does not accept his own sexuality on any human and spontaneous level. On the other hand, Kreisler seeks either to coldly ignore the presence of a woman in his life, or even in his room, or seeks, imaginatively, to abase himself before her,[73] or, finally, to debase or degrade her before him, in terms of actual action -- as he does by raping Bertha. Kreisler's coldness in the presence of women is immediately projected in our first introduction to him with a woman present, as his girl-friend, and comrade-in-poverty, Suzanne, comes to visit him.

> This old sweetheart just then disagreeably occupied his mind. But he busied himself about further items of toilet with increased precision. To a knock he answered with careful "Come in." He did not take his eyes from the glass, spotted blue tie being pinched into position. He watched with impassibility above and around his tie the entrance of a young woman.
>
> "Good morning. So you're up already," she said in French.
>
> He treated her as coolly as he had his thoughts. Appearing just then, she gave his manner towards the latter something human to play on, with relief.[74] (The italics are mine.)

Here, Suzanne appears just when Kreisler is thinking of his present step-mother, a previous girl-friend of his, whom his father seduced and married.[75] The Freudian relevance of the fact that Kreisler's step-mother -- that is, the only available mother-figure -- was also his lover should not be missed. This irony seems to be Lewis's way of saying "Touché!" to both Freud and to Kreisler.[76] And, just as Lewis affirms elsewhere, Kreisler utilizes the presence of a woman to assuage his painful thoughts, to superficially preoccupy him as a release from more caustic inner stresses.[77]

This cold use of the woman as a distraction and palliative or recourse is paradoxically illuminated by Kreisler's almost masochistic abasement of himself in the face of Anastasya, who challenges him both sexually and intellectually -- as she does Tarr also.[78] Both Tarr and Kreisler are intimidated by Anastasya's flamboyance; each reacts differently, Tarr exploiting her sexually (just as Kreisler does Bertha), and Kreisler salivating at her on the psychic level, while narcissistically seeking to immolate himself in front of her. Obviously, Kreisler is not man enough to compete with either Tarr or Soltyk for her -- for his psychic relation to these rivals is far too complex to allow for such real commitment to the attainment of this woman as a goal. Lewis reveals these complexities in the metaphor with which Kreisler expresses his desire for Anastasya, a metaphor which indicates the simultaneously bestial and narcissistically inbred nature of his sexuality. Kreisler sees his initial attraction to Anastasya in the following way:

> Casting about desperately for means of handling the situation, he remembered she had spoken of getting a dog to guide her. -- What had she meant? Anyway, he grasped at the dog. He could regain possession of himself in romantic stimulus of this figure. He would be her dog! Lie at her feet! He would fill with a merely animal warmth and vivacity the void that must exist in her spirit. His imagination, flattered, came in as ally. This, too, exempted him from the necessity of being victorious. All he asked was to be her dog! Even if she did not feel much sympathy for him now, no matter. -- He would humbly follow her up, put himself at her disposal, not be exigent. It was a role difficult to refuse him. Sense of security the humility of this resolution brought about caused him to regain a self-possession. Only it imposed the condition, naturally, of remaining a dog. -- Every time he felt his retiring humbleness giving place to another sensation, he anew felt qualms.
>
> "Do you intend studying here, Fraulein?" he asked, with a new deference in his tone -- hardly a canine whine, but deep servient bass of the faithful St. Bernard. -- She seemed to have noticed this something new already, and Kreisler on all fours evidently astonished her. She was inclined to stroke him, but at the same time to ask what was the matter.[79]

The appeal of the role of dog, as well as the use of this image, with all its abject psychological implications, reveals the limited nature of Kreisler's sexuality. Clearly, he cannot respond in a healthily aggressive way to a sexual situation that is both challenging, normal, and egalitarian -- for example, meeting a beautiful woman who attracts him. The strange, inverted passivity revealed in this choice of role and image, and in his overall response to this woman's initial attraction is again reflected in the masochistic but nonetheless virulent self-denigration which is contained in the following passage, again describing Kreisler's sexual response to Anastasya:

> But he wanted to suffer still more by her; *physically*, as it were, under her eyes. That would be a relief from present suffering. He must look in her eyes; he must excite in her the maximum of contempt and dislike. He wanted to be in her presence again, with full consciousness that his mechanical idyll was barred by Fate. Not strong enough to leave things as they were, he could not go away with this incomplete, and, physically, uncertain picture behind him. It was as though a man had lost a prize and wanted written and stamped statement that he had lost it. *He wished to shame her. If he did not directly insult her, he would at least insult her by thrusting himself on her. Then, at height of her disgust, he would pretend to make advances.*[80]
>
> As to the rest of the party, a sour glee possessed him at thought of *their* state by the time he had done with them. He already saw their faces in fancy when he should ring their bell and present himself, old morning suit, collar none too clean, dusty boots. All this self-humiliation and suffering he was preparing for himself was wedded with the *thought of retaliation*. Kreisler's schooldays could have supplied him with a parallel if he could have thought just then. He saw a curious scene proceeding beneath a desk in class. The boy next to him had jabbed his neighbour in the hand with a penknife. The latter, pale with fury, held his hand out in sinister invitation, hissing, "Do it again! Do it again!" The boy next to Kreisler complied. "Do it again!" came still fiercer. He seemed to want to see his hand a mass of wounds and delect himself with the awful feeling of his own rage. Kreisler did not know how he should wipe out this debt with the world, but he wanted it bigger, more crushing. *The bitter fascination of suffering drew him to substitute real wounds for imaginary*.[81] (The italics are mine.)

In both of the preceding passages, the violence comes through most saliently to the reader. This message and theme of violence is indicative of the fact that, as Lewis portrays him, for Kreisler sex _is_ a form of violence, and sexuality a violent, sado-masochistic affair. This violence manifests itself in even the most innocently social forms of sexually-oriented interaction -- the dance -- as Lewis shows us in a picture of Kreisler dancing:

> He clasped her firmly in the small of the back and they got ponderously in motion, he stamping a little bit, as though he mistook the waltz for a more primitive music.
>
> He took her twice, with ever-increasing velocity, round the large hall, and at the third round, at breakneck speed, spun with her in the direction of the front door.
>
> The impetus was so great that she, although seeing her peril, could not act sufficiently as a break on her impetuous companion to avert the disaster. Another moment and they would have been in the street, amongst the traffic, a disturbing meteor, whizzing out of sight, had they not met the alarmed resistance of a considerable English family entering the front door as Kreisler bore down upon it. It was one of those large, featureless, human groups built up by a frigid and melancholy pair, uncannily fecund, during interminable years of blankness. They received this violent couple in their midst. The rush took Kreisler and his partner half-way through, and there they stood embedded and unconscious for many seconds. The English family then, with great dignity, disgorged them and moved on.[82]

Lewis makes quite clear then, that violence is Kreisler's medium -- whether in something as simple and social as dancing, or in some complex response to a sexual stimulus. Violence is also an ingredient in his response, on the simple human and social level, to interaction with others in which sexuality does not seem to be at issue. In the following conversation with Lowndes, it is obviously ever-present, just below the surface:

> Every minute Kreisler delayed increased the difficulty. His energy was giving out. They were now sitting on the _terrasse_ at the Berne. He had developed a particular antipathy to borrowing. An immense personal neurasthenia had grown up round this habit of his, owing to his late discomfitures. He already heard an awkward voice,

> saw awkward eyes. Then he suddenly concluded that the fact that Lowndes was not a German made it more difficult, instead of less so, as he had thought. Why could he not take? -- why petition? *He knew that if Lowndes refused he would break out; he nearly did so as it was. With disgust and fatigue* he lay back in his chair, paying no attention to what Lowndes was saying.[83] (The italics are mine.)

Indeed, because Kreisler does not relate positively to others, asking favors must become an indignity, since he has nothing to offer in return, as he cannot give. With Volker, his emotional and financial parasitism had gone untrammelled; hence, with Volker, he had found a harbour of peace, which transcended heterosexual need.[84] (And, it is important to note that, when his parasitism is being satisfied, heterosexuality recedes for Kreisler -- an indication that such heterosexuality *is* a secondary need for him.) For Kreisler, then, as Lewis delineates him, heterosexual needs are secondary and dispensable ones (as his relationship with Volker suggests); additionally, because violence is his natural medium, sex is necessarily another form of violent expression. However, this is not all: for Kreisler, sex is not merely a form of violence, but it is also a form of punishment, of specifically violent punishment. Lewis elucidates this fact very plainly in his depiction of Kreisler's response not only to Anastasya (where he is both sadistic and masochistic in his response to Anastasya's psycho-sexual challenge),[85] but also in his response to, and treatment of, Bertha. Sex as a form of sadistic violence is the basic principle which Lewis defines in Kreisler's behaviour towards Bertha. This fact is hinted at in Kreisler's conversation with Tarr, where he invokes Nietzsche in support of his own sadism:[86]

> "You haven't yet given me your opinion of Bertha. You permitted yourself a truculent flourish that evaded the question."

> "I wish to evade the question. -- I told you that she has tricked you. She is very *malin*! She is tricking me now; or she is trying to. She will not succeed with *me*! 'When you go to take a woman you should be careful not to forget your *whip*!' *That* Nietzsche said too!"
>
> "Are you going to give her a beating?" Tarr asked.
>
> Kreisler laughed in a ferocious and ironical manner.[87]

Lewis projects Kreisler's view of sex as a form of punishment even more clearly in delineating Kreisler's initial response to the romantically empathetic Bertha. Bertha, on the one hand, is caught up in the self-immolative pain of her decision to "free" the discontented Tarr from his residual involvement with her (a move which *he* is obviously too weak to make himself); she therefore projects her own sense of pain unto Kreisler. On the other hand, Kreisler cannot respond on any similar level to the passionate empathy she seems to offer him in what she perceives as *his* mysterious misery. Instead, he characteristically interprets this empathy on the purely sexual level, and exploits it with a punitively sexual response. Thus, Lewis tells us:

> She was crying a little, engrossed directly, now, in herself. He thought he should console her.
>
> "Those are the first tears ever shed over my *frac*. But do not distress yourself, Fraulein Lunken. The *garçons* have not yet got it!"
>
> Kreisler did not distinguish Bertha much from the others. At the beginning he was distrustful in a mechanical way at her advances. If not "put up" to doing this, she at least hailed from a quarter that was conspicuous for Teutonic solidarity. Now he accepted her present genuineness, but ill-temperedly substituted complete boredom for mistrust, and at the same time would use this little episode to embellish his programme.
>
> He had not been able to shake her off: it was astonishing how she had stuck: and here she still was; he was not even sure yet that he had the best of it. His animosity for her friends vented itself on her. *He would anyhow give her what she deserved for her disagreeable persistence. He shook her hand again. Then suddenly he stopped, put his arm round her waist, and drew her forcibly against him*. She succumbed to the instinct to "give up," and even sententiously "destroy." She remembered her resolve -- a double one of sacrifice -- and pressed her lips, shaking and wettened, to his. This was not the

> way she had wished: but, God! what did it matter? *It mattered so little, anything*, and above all *she*! This was what she had wanted to do, and now she had done it!
>
> The "resolve" was a simple one. In hazy, emotional way, she had been making up her mind to it ever since Tarr had left that afternoon. He wished to be released, did not want her, was irked, not so much by their formal engagement as by his liking for her (this kept him, she thought she discerned). A stone hung round his neck, he fretted the whole time, and it would always be so. Good. This she understood. Then *she* would release him. But since it was not merely a question of *words*, of saying "we are no longer engaged" (she had already been very free with them), but of acts and facts, she must bring these substantialities about. By putting herself in the most definite sense out of his reach and life -- far more than if she should leave Paris, their continuance of relations must be made impossible. Somebody else -- and a somebody else who was at the same time *nobody*, and who would evaporate and leave no trace the moment he had served her purpose -- must be found. She must be able to stare pityingly and resignedly, but silently, if he were mentioned. Kreisler exactly filled this ticket. And he arose not too unnaturally.
>
> This idea had been germinating while Tarr was still with her that morning.
>
> So, a prodigality and profusion of self-sacrifice being offered her in the person of Kreisler, she behaved as she did.
>
> This clear and satisfactory action displayed her Prussian limitation; also her pleasure with herself, that done. *Should Tarr wish it undone*, it could easily be so. The smudge on Kreisler's back was a guarantee, and did the trick in more ways than he had counted on. But in any case his whole personality was a perfect alibi for the heart, to her thinking. At the back of her head there may have been something in the form of a last attempt here. With the salt of jealousy, and a really big row, could Tarr perhaps be landed and secured even now?
>
> In a moment, the point so gained, she pushed Kreisler more or less gently away. It was like a stage-kiss. *The needs of their respective roles had been satisfied*.[88] (The italics are mine.)

In this passage, Lewis makes clear the fact that Kreisler's use of sex as punishment or violence intermeshes with Bertha's naive sexual masochism, to produce an interaction which is, paradoxically, sexual in nature, yet non-sexual or neo-sexual in origin. This interaction is typical of the intermeshing of sexual, non-sexual, and neo-sexual psychological motives which constitute the complex of human sexuality as Lewis portrays it. The nuances in human motivation, and the highly complex manner in which these motivations interact with, and act upon, each other in the specifically sexual sphere, lend richness and realism to Lewis's depiction of human sexuality. These complexities and nuances also lend the potentially tragic element to Lewis's analyses of human sexuality -- an element which gives added dimension and depth to these analyses and explorations.

Lewis presents us with the apotheosis of Kreisler's view of, and use of, sex as a form of violence, and of brutal punishment, in his depiction of the classic expression of sex as such -- namely, in Kreisler's rape of Bertha. Enough has recently been said concerning the specifically non-sexual but rather, aggressive, nature of rape[89] to support our contention that this act[90] is in no way to be mistaken for proof that Kreisler is merely another representation of the erotic "super-stud" -- just as Tarr's indulgence in Don-Juan-type compensation by his respective "whorings"[91] with both Bertha and Anastasya are in no way proof of his indisputable involvement with, or commitment to, heterosexuality. By initially placing this happening in an introductory context of "destiny," Lewis hints at the inscrutable larger pattern of complicated human motivations which forms the backdrop for human sexual behaviour, as he reveals it. Thus, Lewis comments, in a telling understatement:

> Destiny has more power over the superstitious. They attract constantly bright fortunes and disasters within their circle. Destiny had laid its trap in the unconscious Kreisler. It fixed it with powerful violent springs. Eight days later (dating from the Observatoire meeting), it snapped down on Bertha.[92]

We have seen that Kreisler's sexuality is a perversion of sexuality. Because he can only see women as differing variations of the mother figure -- solace, recourse, or convenience -- he cannot relate to them on a normal and humane basis of shared joy in heterosexuality. Nor can he accept their existence as free and autonomous sexual beings. This seems a logical result of the possibility that he does not accept himself as such a being, either, and that this non-acceptance of himself in this light is at the root of his larger sexual distortions. If we define rape as a perversion of sexuality, then we will see that Kreisler's rape of Bertha is merely consistent with his necrophilous orientation towards violence, and his alienation from the vital expression of life which is symbolized, for the biophilous individual, in the mutual pleasures of free and equal heterosexuality.[93]

Kreisler has asked Bertha to sit as a model for him; instead of painting her, he rapes her. Characteristically, he has substituted sex -- or, rather, a perversion of sexuality, and a distortion of sex -- for his pursuit of art. This can be seen also as another version of Tarr's inadequate perception of the art-versus-life-versus-sexuality relation. In Kreisler's action, Lewis presents us with an extreme form of that same fragmentation which, as we have seen, marks Tarr's orientation to both sex and art as mutually non-exclusive parts of life. Kreisler's violent perversion merely constitutes an ultimate expression of that same fragmentation which Tarr's ruminations, rationalizations, and sexual self-indulgences initiate. It seems fair to see this connection as another proof of what we have previously defined as the Tarr-Kreisler unity. Thus, with a stress on the almost mechanical and non-human quality of Kreisler's behaviour, Lewis tells us:

> This had been, too, a desperate practical joke in its madness and inconsequence. But it was of the solemn and lonely order. At its consummation there had been no chorus of intelligible laughter. An uncontrolled Satyr-like figure had leapt suddenly away: *Bertha, in a struggle that had been outrageous and extreme, fighting with the silence of a confederate beneath the same ban of the world. A joke too deep for laughter, parodying the phrase, alienating sorrow and tears, had been achieved. The victim had been conscious of an eeriness*.
>
> A folded blouse lay on the corner of Kreisler's trunk. Bertha's arms and shoulders were bare, her hair hanging in wisps and strips, generally -- a Salon picture was the result. For purposes of work (he had asked her to sit for him), the blouse had been put aside. A jagged tear in her chemise over her right breast also seemed the doing of a Salon artist of facile and commercial invention.[94]
>
> Kreisler stood at the window. His eyes had a lazy, expressionless stare, his lips were open. Nerves, brain and the whole body were still spinning and stunned, his muscles teeming with actions not finished, sharp, when the actions finished. *He was still swamped and stung with violence*. His sudden immobility, as he stood there, made the riot of movement and will rise to his brain like wine from a weak body. *Satisfaction had, however, stilled everything* except this tingling prolongation of action.[95] (The italics are mine.)

In a telling passage, Lewis places Kreisler's actions, and their effects on Bertha, in the larger, ironic context of the overwhelming complex of the web of human motivations and sensibility which form the framework to sexual action, as Lewis portrays it. In this passage, Lewis reveals the absurdity of Bertha's psycho-sexual naïveté and her helpless romanticism, showing the connection between these and Kreisler's ruthless opportunism. At the same time, by revealing the terrible shock which necessarily marks her reaction, Lewis recognizes her vulnerable innocence, in a situation of sexual complexity which renders her an inevitable sexual victim. Thus, Lewis projects Bertha's reaction:

> The inanity of what had happened to her showed as her unique, intelligible feeling. Her being there at all, her eccentric conduct of the last week, what disgusting folly! Ever since she had known Tarr, her "sentiment" had been castigating her. A watchful fate appeared to be inventing morals to show her the folly of her perpetual

> romancing. And now this had happened. It was senseless. There was not a single atom of compensation anywhere. She was not one of those, who, were there any solid compensation of sentiment and necessity (such as, in the most evident degree, was the case with Tarr), would draw back from natural conclusions. Then conclusive physical matters were a culmination of her romance, and not a separate and disloyal gratification. It never occurred to her that they could be arrived at without traversing the romance.[96] (The italics are mine.)

Kreisler's rape of Bertha goes beyond the normal abnormal level of his interaction with women. This normal abnormal level is one shared with Tarr, as both men continually act out their psychoses through the medium of their mutilating interaction with women. Rape, is, however, sexual predatoriness taken to a psychopathic[97] extreme; it may also be seen as the ultimate mechanization and dehumanization of sexuality, lacking as it does by very definition, the vital qualities of shared and mutually satisfying human interaction. Fromm has defined the mechanistic sensibility as being an essential part of the necrophilous personality.[98] An important proof of the validity of our description of Kreisler as such as necrophilous personality, therefore, is Lewis's own stress on the highly mechanical quality in Kreisler's sexual actions and reactions, as epitomized in his rape of Bertha. This rape, then, becomes a delineation of the final direction of the nature of the sexuality of the mechanical man, a type which finds its ultimate personification elsewhere in Lewis's writing.[99] In the following passage, Lewis conveys the sense of the mechanization of Kreisler's activity and sensibility as well as of his sexuality, through the use of a cinematic slide-image effect. Through Bertha's horrified eyes, the reader catches snapshot-like glimpses of an unbelievable, non-human automaton which relaxes just as coldly as it ravages, just as unthinkingly, just as mechanically and automatically:

> He was standing there at the window now as though wishing to pretend that he had done nothing; she "had been dreaming things" merely. The long silence and monotony of the posing had prepared her for the strangeness now. It had been the other extreme out of which she had been flung and into which, at present, she was again flung. She saw side by side and unconnected the silent figure drawing her and the other one full of blindness and violence. Then there were two other figures, one getting up from the chair, yawning, and the present lazy one at the window -- four in all, that she could not bring together somehow, each in a complete compartment of time of its own. It would be impossible to make the present idle figure at the window interest itself in these others. A loathsome, senseless event, of no meaning, naturally, to that figure there. It had quietly, indifferently, talked: it had drawn: it had suddenly flung itself upon her and taken her, and now it was standing idly there. It could do all these things. It appeared to her in a series of precipitate states. It resembled in this a switchback, rising slowly, in a steady insouciant way to the top of an incline, and then plunging suddenly down the other. Or a mastiff's head turning indolently for some seconds and then snapping at a fly, detached again the next moment. Her fury and animal hostility did not last more than a few minutes. She had come there, got what she did not expect, and now must go away again. There was positively nothing more to be said to Kreisler. She had spasmodic returns of raging. They did not pass her dourly active mind. There never had been anything to say to him. He was a mad beast.[101]

The foregoing passage seems to indicate that the animal content of Kreisler's sexual behaviour is linked to the non-human, and therefore the mechanical. Thus, Lewis's description of Kreisler's rape of Bertha is a projection of rape as the ultimate mechanization of sexuality, as the sexual expression and behaviour of the mechanized sensibility. This point is further supported by the following passage, where Lewis again counterpoints Kreisler's mechanistic sexual response with Bertha's sexual naïveté:

> He had been treated by her as a cypher, as something vague to put up against her friends. All along for the last week he had been a shadowy and actually unimportant figure. He had shown no consciousness of this. *Rather dazed and machine-like himself, Bertha had treated him as she had found him. Suddenly, without any direct articulateness, he had revenged himself as a machine might do, in a nightmare. At a leap he was in the rigid foreground of her life. He had absorbed all the rest in an immense clashing wink*. But the moment following this "desperateness" he stood, abstracted, distant and baffling as before. It was difficult to realize he was there.[102] (The italics are mine.)

The final sentence of the final paragraph in Chapter VIII of the novel reveals the ultimate irony in the vast sexual complex which Lewis projects as the background for Kreisler's mechanization of sex. In this sentence, also, Lewis reveals the complete irrelevance of a woman's naïve humanity and innocence to a man whose orientation is as coldly inhuman, as mechanistic and as necrophilous as is Kreisler's:

> She had done up her hair; her hat was once more on her head. She went towards the door, her face really haggard, inevitable consciousness of drama too in it. Kreisler turned round, went towards the door also, unlocked it, let her pass without saying anything, and, waiting a moment, closed it *indifferently* again. *She was let out as a workman would have been, who had been there to mend a shutter or rectify a bolt*.[103] (The italics are mine.)

Kreisler, Soltyk and Volker -- The Male Triangle

We have already claimed that Soltyk, and not Anastasya or Bertha, or any other woman, is *the* dynamic figure in Kreisler's social and sexual worlds, and that Soltyk provides the essential link between the two dimensions of Kreisler's sexuality -- the dimension which includes men, and that which includes women. The male dimension of Kreisler's sexuality is dominated by his relationship with Volker, which is mirrored in, and related to, his relationship with his father. Of his relationship with Volker, Lewis tells us:

> Since knowing Volker, no woman had come conspicuously to disturb him. Volker had been the ideal element of balance in his life.
>
> But between this state -- the minimum degree of friendship possible -- a distant and soothing companionship -- and more serious states, there was no possible foothold for Kreisler.
>
> Friendship usually dates from unformed years. But Love still remains in full swing long after Kreisler's age at that time; a sort of spurious and intense friendship.[104]

Of Soltyk and Kreisler, *vis-à-vis* Volker, Lewis tells us:

> He [Kreisler] did not get on well with Soltyk. Louis Soltyk was a young Russian, half Polish, who occasionally sat amongst the Germans at the Berne. Volker saw more of him than any body. It was he who had superseded Kreisler in the position of influence as regards Volker's purse. Soltyk did not borrow a hundred marks. His system was far more up to date. Ernst had experienced an unpleasant shock in coming into contact with Kreisler's clumsy and slovenly, small-scale money habits again! *Soltyk physically bore, distantly and with polish, a resemblance to Kreisler*. Kreisler and he disliked each other for obscure physiological reasons: they had perhaps scrapped in the dressing-rooms of creation for some particular fleshly covering, and each secured only fragments of a coveted garment. *In some ways, then, Soltyk was his efficient and more accomplished counterpart, although as empty and unsatisfactory as he*.[105] (The italics are mine.)

In this passage, Lewis indicates that there is a strong antagonistic identification between Kreisler and Soltyk -- an identification which seems, by inference, almost reminiscent of an *alter-ego* relation.[106] Similarly, there is a relation of correspondence or parallelism between the Kreisler-father-step-mother relationship and the Kreisler-Volker-Soltyk relationship. Kreisler's relationship with his father has been blocked by the latter's seduction of, and marriage to, Kreisler's former fiancée, who then becomes his step-mother. Lewis reveals Kreisler's relationship with his father, therefore, as one of conflict, involving a struggle for power, in which money (on which Kreisler depends, as he is still dependent entirely on his father's support), is the manipulative lever. The elder Kreisler wishes his son to abandon his pursuit of art -- unsuccessful as this is -- and return home to Germany to become a businessman. Kreisler's refusal to co-operate with his parent's plans for his life adds further fuel to the fires of the conflict which are clearly based in a sexual competition -- won by the father, who marries his son's fiancée.[107] This conflict is, revealingly, expressed in pecuniary terms:

> The elder Kreisler had repeatedly infuriated his son, calculating on such effect, by sending his allowance only when written for, and even then neglecting the appeal for several days. It came frequently wrapped up in bits of newspaper, and his letters of demand and expostulation were never answered. On two occasions forty marks and thirty marks respectively had been deducted, merely as an irritative measure.[108]

Furthermore, Lewis tells us:

> His father had got a certain amount of pleasure out of him. Otto had satisfied in him in turn the desire of possession (that objects such as your watch, your house, which could equally well belong to anybody, do not satisfy), of authority (that servants do not satisfy), of self-complacency (that self does not): had been to him, later, a kind of living cinematograph and travel-book combined; and, finally, had inadvertently lured with his youth a handsome young woman into the paternal net. But he knew that he could procure no further satisfaction to this satiated parent. He could be henceforth a source only of irritation and expense.[109]

The conflict which exists between Kreisler and his father is expressed in the drama which accompanies the parent's deliberate tardiness in remitting cheques for the son's allowance. Clearly, this humiliating game is another method by which the father emasculates the son. However, the final checkmate in this game is initiated by Kreisler, in response to his father's ultimatum that he must return to Germany immediately, or his support will be withdrawn. Kreisler checkmates this grim game in a manner which is altogether in keeping with his basically necrophilous orientation and sensibility -- he simply threatens suicide. This is not, Lewis makes clear, an empty threat. Rather, it is a natural expression of that necrophilous, death-oriented sensibility which in Kreisler has found its other expression in his indifference, his violence, his sado-masochistic response to sexual stimuli, his rapaciously violent, mechanistic sexual activity, and his uncertain sexuality. This expression of his inherent suicidal tendencies and intentions is his final answer to his father's demands.

It is also the resolution of his larger problem -- namely, the problem of life and of living. It is the final expression, the inevitable choice, of his most basic personality tendencies -- namely, his necrophilous orientation.

Lewis indicates these facts in the following passage, which presents the reader with one of his clearest statements on Kreisler's true personality -- his basically death-oriented and necrophilous nature:

> Kreisler felt it an indignity to have to open it. [the letter] Until his dressing was finished, it remained where it was. He might have been making some one wait. Then he took it up, and opening it, drew out between his forefinger and thumb, the cheque. This he deposited with as much contempt as possible, and a "phui" on the edge of his washhand stand. Then he turned to the letter. He read the first few lines, pumping at a cigarette, reducing it mathematically to ash. Cold fury entered his mind with a bound at the first words. They were the final words giving notice of a positive stoppage of supplies. This month's money was sent to enable him to settle up his affairs and come to Germany at once.
>
> He read the first three lines over and over again, going no further, although the news begun in these first lines was developed throughout the two pages of the letter. Then he put it down beside the cheque, and crushing it under his fist, said monotonously to himself, without much more feeling than the sound of the word contained: "Schwein, Schwein, Schwein!"
>
> He got up, and pressed his hand on his forehead; it was wet; he put his hands in his pockets and these came into contact with a cinquante centime piece. He took them out again slowly, went to his box and underneath an old dressing-gown found writing paper and envelopes. Then, referring to his father's letter for the date, he wrote the following lines:
>
> "7th June 19--
>
> "SIR, -- I shall not return as you suggest in person, but my body will no doubt be sent to you about the middle of next month. If -- keeping to your decision -- no money is sent, it being impossible to live without money, I shall on the seventh of July, this day next month, shoot myself.
>
> "OTTO KREISLER."

> Within half an hour this was posted. *Then he went and had breakfast with more tranquility and relish than he had known for some days*. He sat up stiffly like a dilapidated but apparently in some way satisfied rooster at his café table. *This life was now settled, pressure ceased*. He had come to a conventional and respectable decision. His conduct the night before, for instance, had not been at all respectable. *Death -- like a monastery -- was before him, with equivalents of a slight shaving of the head merely, a handful of vows, some desultory farewells, very restricted space, but none the worse for that; with something like the disagreeableness of a dive for one not used to deep water. But he had got into life, anyhow, by mistake; il s'était trompé de porte. His life might almost have been regarded as a long and careful preparation for voluntary death*. The nightmare of death, as it haunted the imaginations of the Egyptians, had here been conjured in another way. Death was not to be overcome with embalmings and Pyramids, or fought within the souls of children. It was confronted as some other more uncompromising race (and yet also haunted by this terrible idea) might have been.
>
> *Instead of rearing smooth faces of immense stone against it, you imagine an unparalleled immobility in life, a race of statues, throwing flesh in Death's path instead of basalt. Kreisler would have undoubtedly been a high priest among this people*.[110] (The italics are mine.)

Concerning Kreisler's relationships with, and response to, women, as opposed to his relationship with, and response to, Volker, Lewis tells us, on the one hand:

> A casual observer of the progress of Otto Kreisler's life might have said that the chief events, the crises, consisted of his love affairs -- such as that unfortunate one with his present stepmother. -- *But, in the light of a careful analysis, this would have been an inversion of the truth. When the events of his life became too unwieldy or overwhelming, he converted them into love, as he might have done, with specialized talent, into some art or other*.[111] (The italics are mine.)

On the other hand, of his relationship with Volker, Lewis tells us:

> *Since knowing Volker, no woman had come conspicuously to disturb him. Volker had been the ideal element of balance in his life*.[112] (The italics are mine.)

Furthermore, Lewis defines Kreisler's relationship with Volker as follows:

> Volker had been a compendious phenomenon in his life, although his cheery gold had attracted him to the more complete discovery. *He had ousted women, too, from Kreisler's daily needs*. He had become a superstition for his tall friend.
>
> It was Kreisler's deadness, his absolute lack of any reason to be confident and yet perfect aplomb, that mastered his companion. But this acquired eventually its significance as well, for Kreisler. The inertia and phlegm, outward sign [sic] of depressing everyday Kreisler, had found some one for whom they were a charm and something to be envied. Kreisler's imagination woke shortly after Volker's. It was as though a peasant who had always regarded his life as the dullest affair, were suddenly inspirited about himself by realizing some townsman's poetic notion of him. Kreisler's moody wastefulness and futility had found a *raison d'etre* and meaning.
>
> *Ernst Volker had remained for three vague years becalmed on this empty sea. Kreisler basked round him, never having to lift his waves and clash them together as formerly he had been forced sometimes to do. There had been no appeals to life. Volker had been the guarantor of his peace*. His failure was the omen of the sinking ship, the disappearance of the rats!
>
> *Then they had never arrived at terms of friendship. It had only been only an epic acquaintanceship, and Kreisler had taken him about as a parasite that he pretended not to notice*.
>
> There was no question, therefore, of a reproach at desertion. He merely hopped off on to somebody else. Kreisler was more exasperated at this than at the defection of a friend, who could be fixed down, and from whom at last explanation must come. *It was an unfair advantage taken. A man had no right to accompany you in that distant and paradoxical fashion, get all he could, become ideally useful, unless it was for life*.
>
> He watched Soltyk's success with distant mockery. *Volker's loves were all husks, of illogical completeness*.[113] (The italics are mine.)

In this passage, Lewis makes clear the fact that this relationship is one which negates or nullifies heterosexual needs, while providing material and psychic satisfaction for Kreisler, and (as the final sentence indicates), psychic satisfaction for the inscrutable Volker. (The reader does not get a very great, detailed, or direct insight into the true personality of Volker.) This relationship is interrupted by Soltyk, however, who supercedes Kreisler with Volker, thus becoming not only Kreisler's psychic "counterpart"[114] (as Lewis asserts elsewhere) but moreover, his psychic rival, for Volker more importantly than for Anastasya. This is because Kreisler's major involvement is never with women, as we have discovered. Rather, Kreisler merely uses or seeks to use, with typical psychic opportunism,[115] his infatuation with Anastasya to help to fill the emotional or psychic void left by his loss of the relationship with Volker. This fact is clear in the following passage, where Lewis asserts of Kreisler:

> His nature would probably have sought to fill up the wide, shallow gap left by Ernst and earlier ties either by another Ernst or, more likely, a variety of matter. It would have been only a temporary stopping. Now a gold crown, a regal person, had fallen on the hollow.
>
> But his nature was an effete machine and incapable of working on all that glory. Desperate at dullness, he betook himself to self-lashings. He would respond to utmost [sic] of weakened ability; with certainty of failure, egotistically, but not at a standstill. Kreisler was a German who, by all rights and rules of the national temperament, should have committed suicide some weeks earlier. Anastasya became an *idée fixe*.[116]

Therefore, we can see that, just as his fiancée or stepmother replaces Kreisler in his relationship with his father, or rather, just as his father replaces Kreisler in his with his fiancée (thereby symbolically castrating his son), so Soltyk replaces Kreisler in his relationship with Volker. Lewis makes the similarity of the two situations clear, as he recognizes and defines a link between these multiple relationships, with their corresponding psychological ramifications. Obviously, there is a basic and similar identification inherent in these situations, because of the parallel dynamics in both. Just as Kreisler competed unsuccessfully with his father for his former fiancée, so he has competed unsuccessfully with Soltyk for Volker. Thus, Volker may be seen as performing a parallel role and function for Kreisler as did his former fiancée. (This is not an assumption, since Lewis tells us quite baldly that Volker has superseded all women with Kreisler, as Kreisler's need for the female influence or for heterosexuality has been negated or rendered void by the relationship with Volker.)[117] Thus, just as there is a relationship of conflict and resentment between Kreisler and his father, as his successful rival with his former fiancée, so there is a relationship of antagonistic identification between Kreisler and Soltyk, as his successful rival with Volker.

However, it is easier, and more acceptable within the limited bounds of Kreisler's mechanistically inchoate sensibility, to use Soltyk's contacts with Anastasya as the pretext for the expression of his resentment against him -- a resentment which Lewis makes clear is not rooted in heterosexual rivalry, but rather in homosexual identification and competition. In the following passage, Lewis again shows that heterosexual jealousy as regards Anastasya is merely an alibi for the violent expression of the real cause of Kreisler's real resentment against Soltyk:

> Kreisler saw him [Soltyk] with Anastasya only twice. On these occasions he could not, on the strength of Soltyk's attitude, pin him down as a rival. *Yet he was thirsting for conventional figures*. His endless dissatisfaction and depression could only be satisfied by *active* things, *unlike* itself. Soltyk's self-possessed and masterly signs of distinguished camaraderie depressed Kreisler very much. The Russian *had been there once at the critical moment, and was, more distantly, an attribute of Volker*. He did not like him. *How it would satisfy him to dig his fingers into that flesh, and tear it like thick cloth!* He was "for it"'; he was going out. He was being helped off by things. Why did he not *shout*? He longed to *act*: *the rusty machine had a thirst for action.* His energies were repudiating their master.[118] (The italics are mine.)

Thus, not only has Soltyk superseded Kreisler with Volker, but he also seems to have symbolically superseded him with Anastasya, the object of Kreisler's heterosexual fantasy and sadomasochistic, inexpressible desire.[119]

Ironically, however, Soltyk's interaction with women partakes of the same quality of impotence which marks Kreisler's response to Anastasya (counterbalanced as this impotence is, however, in Kreisler's case, by his violence to Bertha, and psychic sado-masochism towards Anastasya). Lewis indicates this fact in this paragraph:

> Soltyk's analogies with Kreisler worked in the dark to some end of mutual destruction. The nuance of possibility Soltyk liked his friendships with women to have, was a different affair to Kreisler's heady and thorough-going intrigues. But he liked his soul to be marked with little delicate wounds and wistfulnesses. He liked an understanding, a little melancholy, with a woman. They would just divine in each other possibilities of passion, that was yet too *lasse* and sad to rise to the winding of Love's horns that were heard, nevertheless, in a *decor Versaillesque* and Polonais. They were people who looked forward as others look back. They would say farewell to the future as most men gaze at the past. At the most they played the slight dawning and disappearing of passion, cutting, fastidiously, all the rest of the piece. So he was often found with women. Life had no lethargic intervals as with Kreisler. It at all times needed "expression" of some sort.
>
> For Anastasya, Soltyk was one of her many impresarios, who helped her on to and off the scene of Life. He bored her usually, but they had something equivalent to pleasant business relations. She appreciated him as an Impresario.[120]

In their relationships with women, then, both Kreisler and Soltyk betray a similar incapacity for deep involvement. It seems logical to conclude that Volker is, therefore, the most dynamic link between these two men, and the real reason for their conflict, and the real reason for Kreisler's jealousy and resentment of Soltyk. Volker is, then, the reason for what Lewis describes as these two men's dislike of each other "for obscure physiological reasons."[121] Thus, the duel between Kreisler and Volker -- interestingly enough, initiated by Kreisler[122] -- is most accurately to be seen as a confrontation between two males on account of a third male. As such, the duel, with all the specifically humiliating, violent little incidents which precede it[123] can be seen as basically a homosexual confrontation, disguised in the sexist costume of all-male rivalry. Our argument here is reinforced by the fact that Kreisler demands a kiss -- itself a sexual symbol and expression -- as a means by which Soltyk may mollify him and avoid the duel.[124] Outrageous as this request may seem, it comes nearer to the truth of Kreisler's sexuality (as we see it), than any of his more subtle peregrinations -- such as his violent, yet paradoxically impotent, attraction to Anastasya.

Seen in context of these claims, therefore, the kiss, the duel, and Kreisler's suicide[125] all represent merely the working out of a pattern that has been pre-established in Lewis's delineation of Kreisler's basically necrophilous character. This pattern is one marked by sado-masochism, emasculation, perversely uncertain, automatic or mechanical sexual behaviour patterns, and by an overwhelming orientation towards violence and death. However, the delineation of Kreisler is not merely an extroversion of a specifically necrophilous sensibility. It is, moreover, the extroversion of a particular mode of male sexuality -- the symbolically castrated neo-homosexual. Lewis shows us that Kreisler, like his narcissistic counterpart, Tarr, is by virtue of his perverted nature and sexuality, a model for one type of man who will always be essentially a man without women.

Footnotes

[1] Vincent and his sister Maddie (of The Vulgar Streak) fall into this group to a certain extent, but Vincent does learn to feel tenderness for his wife, April, however belatedly. (See Chapter II of this thesis.)

[2] Cf. the final description of René, in Self Condemned: ". . . and the Faculty had no idea that it was a glacial shell of a man who had come to live among them, mainly because they were themselves unfilled with anything more than a little academic stuffing" (Self Condemned, 407).

[3] Cf. Brotcotnaz, in The Wild Body collection, 207-231.

[4] Tarr, 93-95.

[5] Cf. the essay "Inferior Religions," in The Wild Body, 232-242.

[6] Tarr, 62-63.

[7] Ibid., 48. Indeed, Tarr does gain strength from mentally and intellectually putting Bertha down. It is the sense of superiority received from this form of psychic sadism which is basic to his dependence on her. Compare this habit of Tarr's and Snooty's continual snubs, rudeness and insults to Val in the novel Snooty Baronet.

[8] Compare Tarr's insistence on "humourously" handling the Bertha/Tarr relationship with his habit of never taking Bertha seriously, of laughing at her expense, never with her.

[9] Compare Lewis's assertion that "The Greatest Satire Is Non-Moral" (Men Without Art, 103-114). In this regard, the portrait of Tarr can be seen as a portrait of the satirist satirized, of the artist of laughter as moral drop-out. (Tarr's refusal of commitment to either the relationship with Bertha or that with Anastasya can be seen as refusal to make a choice, a refusal of moral commitment, or an escape from the responsibilities of freedom. Both relationships provide him, meanwhile, with an escape from any serious commitment to artistic endeavour.)

[10] The Wild Body, 244.

[11] Ibid., 245.

[12] Tarr, 211-223 and 230-237.

[13] See Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," the London Mercury, 30. 180 (October, 1934), 509-515.

[14] *The Wild Body*, 3-4.

[15] See *The Revenge for Love*, 73-85. (See also Section I, of Chapter V of this thesis.)

[16] See Tarr's conversation with Hobson, *Tarr*, 7-13.

[17] Ibid., 19.

[18] Ibid., 29-30.

[19] Note the military metaphors which Tarr unconsciously uses, revealing his interpretation of interaction with Bertha as *battle*.

[20] *Tarr*, 56-58. Compare this with Kreisler's "laughter-in-action" as a masochistic onslaught on Anastasya, *Tarr*, 139.

[21] Ibid., 34-35.

[22] Ibid., 22-23.

[23] The italics are mine. Note the reference to the mother-figure as a norm of excellence.

[24] *Tarr*, 23-24.

[25] Here Tarr is rationalizing his own fragmentatory view of sex as an isolative function, as opposed to the integrative capacity for making love.

[26] Here, again, Tarr rationalizes his own incapacity for sensuality, his alienation from his senses, and from the immediacies of human reality.

[27] Tarr's negative view of sexuality and of sex is reflected in his choice of adjective here.

[28] Here, again, Tarr reveals his negative view of his own sexuality, and of women, who are *only the apparent* objects of his sexuality, or sexual interest.

[29] This is Tarr's rationalization, *par excellence*, of his own psycho-sexual adequacy, his incapacity to cope with both sexuality *and* art as legitimate components of life. Compare his comments elsewhere (text, page 201 and 203), on the art/life conflict as he sees it.

[30] Tarr, 11-12. In the final arrogant and violent sentences of this monologue, Lewis reveals the really non-communicative, isolative and arbitrary nature of Tarr's declarations. Clearly, Tarr does not see conversation as an affair of mutual participation; instead it is for him an imposition which he arbitrarily inflicts on his listener.

[31] Ibid., 310-312. Compare also page 203, for his initial observations concerning Anastasya.

[32] Ibid., 14.

[33] It is essential to distinguish here between the homo-erotic or committedly homo-sexual man, the man who is latently so, and the man who can best be described as a "homo-social" man. (See J. Lipman-Blumen, "Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions," in M. Blaxall and B. Reagan, eds., Women and The Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation, 15-31.) Indeed, the type of male whom Lewis personifies in the figure of Tarr probably vacillates between the latently homo-sexual model and the homosocial model, whose major intellectual, psychological, social, and affective needs are functionally met by interaction with other males.

[34] The big woman recurs symbolically, it seems, as a satirically loaded icon, apparently challenging traditional concepts of super-masculinity and of ultrafemininity, throughout the novels. (See Hester of Self Condemned, and April of The Vulgar Streak.)

[35] Tarr, 310-311.

[36] Ibid., 311-312.

[37] As Sheila Watson comments, Tarr seems to feel it necessary to save his semen for his art!

[38] In Wyndham Lewis the Novelist, 63-67, Timothy Materer completely misses the satiric element in Lewis's treatment of Tarr.

[39] Tarr, 211-223 and 230-237.

[40] The Wild Body, 244.

[41] Tarr, 210.

[42] Ibid., 180-184.

[43] Compare Ibid., 179, 191 and 192.

[44] Ibid., 210.

[45] Ibid., 198.

[46] Ibid., 203. Compare this passage with similar sentiments expressed on page 209.

[47] Ibid., 203-204.

[48] Ibid., 211.

[49] Ibid., 230-234. Compare this scene with the violence of Kreisler's invocation of Nietzsche, to support his own chauvinistic attitude toward women (text, 216). Compare also with Havelock Ellis's identification of the whip as a phallic symbol, thus indicating the latently sexual nature of the Tarr-Kreisler contact. (See Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol. II, Part 2, 121-169.)

[50] Tarr, 214.

[51] Here, Tarr's introduction of race as a relevant factor in response to sexuality reveals the very limited and stereotyped nature of his approach to sexuality. Compare this remark with Lewis's sardonic depiction of Beresin's frustrating inter-racial sexual adventures in "The War Baby," in Unlucky for Pringle, 104-105.

[52] Ibid., 215.

[53] Ibid., 216.

[54] Agenda, Wyndham Lewis Special Issue, 67-68.

[55] On the one hand, Materer (in Wyndham Lewis The Novelist, 52-67) completely misses the satire on Tarr, and therefore idealizes him. On the other hand, West (Agenda, Wyndham Lewis Special Issue, 67-68) ignores the satire on Tarr, and idealizes Kreisler.

[56] Lewis comments in Men Without Art, 40-41:

> The expression of the soul of the dumb ox would have a penetrating beauty of its own, if it were uttered with genius -- with bovine genius . . . just as much as would the folk-song of the baboon, or of the 'Praying Mantis.'

While Lewis realizes the virtues of Bertha, despite his delineation of her as "dumb ox" or "dumb broad," he indicates that his other puppet, Tarr, misses this aspect of her reality. See Tarr, 307, for Lewis's description of Bertha as follows:

> She stared with incredulous fixity at the floor, her spirit seeming to be arched like a swan and to be gazing down hypnotically.

[57] Tarr's verbal sadism towards Bertha is comparable to Snooty's towards Val (Snooty Baronet).

[58] See S. Brownmiller, Against Our Wills: Men, Women and Rape.

[59] E. Fromm, The Heart of Man, Its Genius for Good and Evil. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

[60] Ibid., 38. (Compare the italicized statement with my

analyses of Kreisler's and Tarr's personalities.)

[61] Ibid., 38.

[62] Ibid., 39.

[63] To paraphrase: "Force is . . . the capacity to transform a man -- or a woman -- into a corpse." Compare Kreisler's use of force in sex, as a sexual weapon to subdue Bertha, by his rape of her. (Tarr, 181-183.)

[64] Fromm, The Heart of Man, Its Genius for Good and Evil, 39-40.

[65] Ibid., 41.

[66] Ibid., 45.

[67] Cf. Ibid., 62-94 with Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume III, Part II, 347-375.

[68] Lewis, Tarr, 93. (I am quoting this passage once again because it provides such important insights into Kreisler's psychosexuality.)

[69] Ibid., 93.

[70] Ibid., 95.

[71] Ibid., 95.

[72] Ibid., 36.

[73] Ibid., 95-96, and 118-119.

[74] Ibid., 67.

[75] Ibid., 94 and 118.

[76] Compare René's interaction with his mother, in Lewis's Self Condemned, 15-30.

[77] Cf. Lewis, Tarr, 93-94.

[78] See Ibid., 302-303, where Anastasya, purloining Tarr's key, appears naked in Tarr's apartment. Her sexual aggressiveness, however, makes things too easy for Tarr, the virginal narcissist, as all he need do in response to her flamboyant seduction is to take, rather than to give.

[79] Ibid., 95-96. Cf. pages 142-143 and 145-146, where Kreisler violently faces the reality of his sexual response to Anastasya.

Cf. Tarr's use of the hut and palace images, redolent of materialism and chauvinism, 292, and 296-7. None of all of these images reveals any concept of heterosexuality as a free, egalitarian thing.

[80] Obviously, Kreisler sees the taking of a sexual initiative as, by definition, a violently sado-masochistic act.

[81] Lewis, Tarr, 118-119.

[82] Ibid., 135.

[83] Ibid., 107.

[84] Ibid., 95.

[85] See Ibid., 118-119, op. cit.

[86] See E. Fromm's analysis of both sadism and masochism as forms of abdication of humanistic responsibility in Escape from Freedom.

[87] Lewis, Tarr, 216. (I repeat this quotation for emphasis.)

[88] Ibid., 129-130.

[89] Compare S. Brownmiller, Against Our Wills: Men, Women and Rape and L. Clark and D. Lewis, Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality, 61-146.

[90] Compare J. Rossner, Looking for Mr. Goodbar, and the analysis of the film by the same name, entitled "Who Else is Looking for Mr. Goodbar?" by T. Johnson, in Ms. magazine, Vol. VI, 8 (February, 1978) 24-26.

[91] Prof. Sheila Watson, in conversation.

[92] Lewis, Tarr, 179.

[93] Fromm, The Heart of Man, Its Genius for Good and Evil, 45-46. Compare the fact of Kreisler's suicide, Tarr, 282-3.

[94] As Professor Sheila Watson indicates, Kreisler, as a potential artist, sees women in terms of an artistic genre -- for example, German Expressionism. Here, he has -- ironically -- by his rape of her, transformed Bertha into merely another type of artistic representation of the woman.

[95] Lewis, Tarr, 180-181.

[96] Ibid., 181-182.

[97] For definitions of the psychopathic, see: Cleckley, The Mask of Sanity, 395-396; Hair, Psychopathy, 1-12; Lenichel, The Psychoanalytical Theory of Neurosis, 463-540; and McCord and McCord, The Psychopath: An Essay on the Criminal Mind, 23-38.

[98] Fromm, The Heart of Man, Its Genius for Good and Evil, 56-59. Compare Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume 1, Part 2, 126, 182, Volume II, Part 1, 188, and Volume III, Part 1, 11, 81.

[99] See our analysis of Snooty (of the novel Snooty Baronet), as Lewis's personification of the mechanical man, in Section II of this chapter.

[100] Compare Lewis, Snooty Baronet, 132-164.

[101] Lewis, Tarr, 183-4.

[102] Ibid., 187.

[103] Ibid., 184.

[104] Lewis, Tarr, 95. (As stated previously, this passage is quoted repeatedly as it represents an important key to the portrayal of Kreisler's character.)

[105] Ibid., 80-81.

[106] Whether or not we see Soltyk as a vaguely defined alter-ego to Kreisler, the physical resemblance which Lewis establishes between the two certainly leaves room for a narcissistic identification, which is, importantly, in sharp contradiction with their apparent competition for Volker's patronage.

[107] It seems logical to conclude that the father's marriage to his son's fiancée represents a symbolic castration of his son.

[108] Lewis, Tarr, 71.

[109] Ibid., 118.

[110] Ibid., 150-152.

[111] Ibid., 94.

[112] Ibid., 95.

[113] Ibid., 83-84.

[114] Ibid., 81.

[115] Cf. Ibid., 93-94.

[116] Ibid., 98-99.

[117] Ibid., 95 and 83, op. cit.

[118] Ibid., 137. Compare also page 258.

[119] Cf. Ibid., 142-143, and 145-146.

[120] Ibid., 138.

[121] Ibid., 81, op. cit.

[122] Ibid., 247 and 255. Again, in this scene, the cane may be seen as a phallic symbol. (See Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Vol. II, Part 2, 121-169.)

[123] Lewis, *Tarr*, 241-245. Here, Kreisler's sadism toward Soltyk is parallel to his sadistic treatment of Bertha, and his sadomasochistic response to the fact of his attraction to Anastasya.

[124] Ibid., 267-268.

[125] Ibid., 282-283.

Snooty Baronet -- The Symbolic Monster-Puppet

One of the achievements of literature is that, when it comprehensively depicts the complexity of human life and of human interaction, it can encapsulate symbolically universal principles of human motivation and behaviour which other disciplines only strive to define. Because of the intuitive nature of the literary delineation of the human condition, this delineation can often articulate complexities in phenomena which other disciplines ignore, or only inadequately imply.[126] It seems highly simplistic to say that Lewis projects, in the novel Snooty Baronet, a portrait of the psychopathic personality. Responses to this statement would undoubtedly include the argument that psychoanalysis has developed theories on the subject of psychopathy of which Lewis was necessarily unaware; and that such theories may post-date Lewis's work, rendering his observations obsolete.

On the contrary, however, it should be clear that, if we accept the claim about the potentiality of literature as a catalytic discipline, which can infer and predict the direction of knowledge, precisely by virtue of its intuitive qualities, what we find in Lewisian literary studies or portraits of the human personality is actually prophetic of the direction and the content of much of the most recent psychoanalytic findings concerning certain human types. In his portrait of Snooty, Lewis has imaginatively articulated all of the factors which even the most incisive psychoanalytic studies[127] have defined as essential components in the psychopathic personality and attitude.

Most social scientists and students of psychology would agree that:

> The psychopath is an asocial, aggressive, highly impulsive person, who feels little or no guilt and is unable to form lasting bonds of affection with other human beings.[128]

It would be simple enough to list those characteristics which major psychologists and social scientists view as defining the psychopathic personality, and then to show how Lewis evokes these qualities in his portrait of Snooty Baronet, the male protagonist of the novel by the same name. Essential to Lewis's portrayal of Snooty's personality are those qualities which are generally accepted as typical of, and peculiar to, that personality type now commonly labelled psychopathic. Particularly noticeable in Lewis's delineation of Snooty is the existence of what are regarded as the most definitive of psychopathic traits, namely, absolute guiltlessness (that is, an absolute immunity from any feelings of guilt)[129] and a basic incapacity to love[130] -- what have been called "the two critical psychopathic traits."[131] Much less simple, however, is the task of charting the method by which Lewis externalizes and studies these qualities in Snooty by imaginative, dramatic and non-dogmatic, but rather exploratory, means.

Lewis's method of exploring the psychopathic personality as manifest in Snooty is primarily a direct one -- a peep into a twisted and unbalanced consciousness -- by the use of Snooty as *persona*. Like Swift's Gulliver,[132] or Camus's Muersault,[133] Snooty tells his own story. Like Gulliver, also, with seeming inadvertence, he reveals the level of his own antisocial attitudes, alienation and neurosis.[134] Like the model of the typical psychopath established by researchers,[135] Snooty makes an initially striking, attractive first impression on the reader; he is intelligent, witty, even apparently ironic about himself.

Lewis immediately projects these aspects of Snooty's personality in our first introduction to him:

> Not a bad face, flat and white, broad and weighty: in the daylight, the worse for much wear -- stained, a grim surface, rained upon and stared at by the sun at its haughtiest, yet pallid still: with a cropped blondish moustache of dirty lemon, of toothbrush texture: the left eye somewhat closed up -- this was a sullen eye. The right eye was more open and looked bright; it sat undisturbed under its rolled-up wide-awake rounded lid. The right side of the face had held out best! -- The nose upon the face indicated strength of character if anything -- the mouth, which did not slit it or crumple it, but burst out of it (like an escaped plush lining of rich pink), that spelled sensitiveness if anything, of an inferior order. The brows and temples were up in a fawn-saffron "Derby." The "Derby" was the ordinary transatlantic "Derby" -- the sort men are careful religiously to remove when they enter the public hall of an hotel, particularly west of Nantucket, to show that they are educated. (There may be ladies there!)
>
> The face was on-the-lookout behind the window-glass of the taxicab. The left eye kept a sullen watch: it was counting. Numbers clicked-up in its counting-box, back of the retina, in a vigesimal [sic] check-off. When it had counted up to a thousand and forty -- starting however at four hundred and eighty (a fifteen-cent-tariff yellow knicker-bocker, as luck would have it) the taxi stopped. The face drew back. The door opened. Grasping the forward jamb, a large man thrust out one leg, which was straight and stiff. Pointing the rigid leg downwards, implacably on to the sidewalk, the big man swung outward, until the leg hit terra-firma. The whole bag-of-tricks thus stood a second crouched in the door of the vehicle. Then stealthily there issued from its door, erect and with a certain brag in his carriage, a black-suited six-footer, a dollar-bill between his teeth, drawing off large driving gauntlets.
>
> The face was mine. I must apologize for arriving as it were incognito upon the scene. No murder has been committed at No. 1040 Livingston Avenue -- I can't help it if this has opened as if it were a gunman best-seller. -- The fact is I am a writer: and the writer has so much the habit of the anonymous, that he is apt to experience the same compunction about opening a book in the First Person Singular (caps. for the First Person Singular) as an educated man must feel about commencing a letter with an "I." But my very infirmity suggested such a method. I could hardly say: "The taxi stopped. I crawled out. I have a wooden leg!" Tactically, that would be hopelessly bad. You would simply say to yourself, "This must be a dull book. The hero has a wooden leg. Is the War not over yet?" and throw the thing down in a very bad temper, cursing your Lending Library.[136]

Like typical models of the psychopath at large,[137] Snooty is also intelligent, coherent, convincing, and capable of social and professional success. (Snooty is a titled war hero and known writer.) However, if we view the delineation of Snooty as Lewis's examination of the portrait of the writer as psychic psychopath, we will view with suspicion such seemingly glib and sophisticated presentations of the self and of others as the following:

> I opened the letter from Valerie, yawning my head off.
>
> What Valerie said in the letter, what she said, that is perfectly immaterial. Old Valerie always got under my skin. (I am apt to employ the idiom of those I suppose I am addressing, you understand me?) I go to see her in her maisonnette. Always I go with reluctance, as if I were going to have out a very cushy tooth, soft and easy, but still a pang. And then that dentist's manner! To continue the simile. What a repulsive technique! Old Val's revolts me.
>
> She is nothing if not shoppy, the old harlot. (But picture to yourself a dentist who giggled all the time while he was yanking your tooth out!) -- Still I go for more! I go regularly. I go with irritation. I go with a subtle confusion. I even go with shame, but I go regularly: sniggering (I catch the trick) I succumb: and old Val whisks my leg off quicker than any woman I know. (I only know two as a matter of fact, with whom my relations are such as to provoke or suggest that act of drastic amputation in the natural course of things, at a certain point in the interview -- where it recommends itself as being if not necessary at least more practical.)
>
> Whenever therefore I took up a letter of Valerie's I did not see the words at all, luckily. No syllable was visible upon the wordy pages. This was a distinct advantage of course. I only heard the voice. But one might go further and say that fortunately the voice itself did not come through at all distinctly -- since it must be confessed that it was not a very attractive one. I just had sensations of sight, a few tactile vibrations, corresponding to a certain number of obscurely pleasant past occurrences. Nothing more.
>
> From all this you will gather, and you will be right, that I am for old Val every time, or was. I suppose I was keen on the old girl, or she'd "got me in the bed" to use her customary expression. Well let us leave it at that. Val was in the enviable position of a siren at that time domiciled in my blood-stream. The words in consequence of her song, anyway, they meant less than nothing. And a sickly old sex-dirge it generally was, which she propelled through the post in coffin-shaped envelopes.[138]

On closer examination of this, as of all of Snooty's declarations, we must bear in mind the force of Lewis's ironic or satirical use of the technique of the persona, and the fact that, in all of Snooty's articulations, he is merely holding up a mirror in which his own narcissism and ruthlessness, (rather than the real nature of the subject of his descriptions), are revealed. Thus, when we see Val, inter alia, through Snooty's eyes, we must remember that all the images which he uses to describe her (or others), must be seen as revealing not the nature of Val or of these others under discussion, but rather the content and direction of Snooty's own warped imagination. Thus, what might initially seem like sophisticated witticisms at Val's expense emerges, when seen in the light of these caveats, as a horribly carping, sadistic vision of another human being. Thus, Snooty's descriptions of Val are not reliable revelations of Val herself (as they are not provided from the point of view of the omniscient observer). They are, however, telling revelations of the content and direction of Snooty's own sensibility.

The following passages, in which Snooty describes Val -- as he sees her -- must be seen in this light. First we should examine Snooty's view of Val's efforts as a writer, and note the condescension and chauvinism which mark this view:

> Still Sex has its place -- single-handed almost it provides this full-fledged portent, Val or another. Undeniably the woman has monopoly of those rudiments of expansive emotion which constitute the beginnings of art. -- It is seriously to be doubted as to old Val (to pass on from the general to the particular) if any longer she realized what she was saying, so accustomed had she become to write it: it is most questionable if she recognized at all clearly what she was writing, so inordinately had her inkslinging stimulated her tongue. It sufficed for her to look out of the window, or to chat with her

> char-girl -- she now scarcely could see or hear anything without incontinently rushing to her inkpot, in an instantaneous diarrhoea of words. Or thundering all day at her Remington, she was threatened surely with the same pulmonary decay, ensuing upon private indisciplines, as the factory-seamstresses surprised by Ellis, lost-to-the-wide in the erotic nepenthe of the sewing-pedal. -- But as we know, there are great sub-hosts of moonstruck women in the same condition. The almost anonymous mass, nameless as far as any significant name goes, of Novels of the Year (communist if by that you understand common and not individual, the sub-activities of crowds, not persons) may at any time assume the proportions of a biblical Plague, upon the same footing with locust or with rat.
>
> But upon this I grew very depressed indeed. It was always the same in this house, she could not hold her tongue, and I swore this should be my last visit. Poor old Val was a melancholy case. The closer her eyes crowded together in her head, the more insanely they glittered, the more recklessly her tongue wagged, in a hide-bound pedantry of essential-sex, a torrent of giggles to keep the words company, the more evident it became to me that here would be a case for the clinic. Three or four years at most would remove this woman out of the age-class beneath the immediate patronage of Venus. Then she would just do nothing but gibber -- and probably write a five-hundred-page novel a day![139]

Secondly, we should note the negative assumptions about her social life and popularity which mark Snooty's observations of Val, again, because these assumptions reveal more about Snooty's attitude towards his girl-friend than they do about either Val or her social life:

> And now a very alarming thing happened. -- The telephone-bell rang!
>
> I positively jumped. I had forgotten that there was such a thing in the world as the telephone. I was totally unprepared. It was unnerving suddenly to hear this excited signal, in the isolated home of this bawdy hermit-crab.
>
> For all her training in a hard-slogging school and good-class dissimulation, Val was not quick enough for her reflexes -- she too started slightly.
>
> It took all her sang-froid, but she threw on the spot a look of deep unconcern into her face. Thereupon a most fascinating conflict of forces developed. There was the impulse to leap to her feet and seize the telephone -- that must in the first moment have been overmastering. Yet at all costs it must be nipped in the bud: there must be nothing of that sort at all! -- Languidly she must rise to her feet, negligently she must remove the receiver. But not too languidly -- not too negligently! For (Hope springs eternal) who might not be at the other end! Anybody might be there at that very

> moment, haughtily tapping a well-turned sapphic toe, and exclaiming grandly to herself -- "*When* is the bitch going to answer I should like to know! I suppose she's got some beastly *man* there -- as usual!" -- Why, "Jane," even, might have gone mad and might suddenly have taken it into her head to call up Val (whom she had only seen once, for ten minutes) might she not! And her access of acute dementia might only last a few seconds! She might come to her senses, once the telephone was in her hand! -- So HURRY! every nerve in poor old Val's body shouted! Time and Tide wait for no man, but there are other things too that are impatient and inexorable. Oh fling yourself upon that telephone, her whole nature must have been shrilly bellowing in her ear.
>
> I admired her in these breathless moments more than I can say. Many firm-lipped stolid skippers upon wave-swept bridges, in the climax of a shipwreck, deserve our admiration less. I felt that I had wasted my amazement upon many self-collected and imperturbable heroes of the history-book. They had the guns thundering about them -- they had been stupified by some mammoth storm-at-sea. To go down in parade-order, with bands playing, is all very well -- *there* you are only one cell among many, in a contagion of sacrifice. This one small adventuress was the entire crew of *her* cockle-shell! Oh good old Val! -- I sent up a tenuous *Bravo*![140]

Again, as he primarily reveals the direction of his own sexual fantasy, Snooty describes Val as follows:

> "Happy days" I said and carried the glass to my lips.
>
> Old Val stood a pace or two off from where I was. She drank a little Three Star. Then she put down the glass, pushing it on to the table, and stood with down cast eyes -- she was white-collared, stiff, shut up in a 'mutinous silence,' parading the archaic reserve of the Children's Nursery. My own imitation-Society-'piece' -- modelled on the best Late Mayfair (Peter Pan Model) was out to perform before me (a Command Performance, I don't think!) the chidden aproned Miss. She was a damask-cheeked Miss of fourteen or fifteen Springs (say in a mid-victorian Boarding Establishment). Sullenly she awaited the executioner's pleasure, with neck-bent, and a well-whipped sanctimonious 'poke' thrust of the pentathletic head. She was in the presence of *The Principal*: he (with all his rods in pickle) was about -- so old Val would interpret it -- to up with her dimity frock and administer a well-deserved *fessée*. But (overcome by the luscious contacts) destined to follow this up with extremely improper advances.
>
> "Lonely nights!" she gave the correct Music-hall response, piling on the demureness in chrismatic clots, out-cloying Devon (her lips succeeding in becoming the ripest of prime hothouse strawberries) but with as much of the sly as became a wronged woman -- or a victorian flapper-minx-in-the-wrong, her B.T.M. already smarting in anticipation. So we stood, face to face.[141]

In this passage, as in the two previously quoted, we see more of Snooty and his own sensibility, and its content, than we do of Val. By the images he chooses to describe Val, Snooty reveals the image which he himself has created of her. It is, obviously, to this self-created image, rather than to her reality, that he responds. This immersion within his own inner vision, this enslavement to his own ego and its creations, is typical of Snooty's narcissistic immunity to outside reality, and of the distortions of his sensibility. Here, this habit of distorted perception reveals not merely the unreal image of Val which Snooty has created, and to which he responds, but also the distorted nature of his own sexual fantasy and desire. Thus, we can see that Snooty is subordinating Val's reality to his own sexual fantasy and the needs which accompany this, to the exclusion of reality, and to the preclusion of any possibility of spontaneous interaction. The sadism which is latent in Snooty's sexual image of Val, and in his response to that image, is reflected in the violence with which Snooty describes his sexual contact with her:

> "Come Valley!" I muttered cordially.
>
> She grappled with me at once, before the words were well out of my mouth, with the self-conscious gusto of a Chatterley-taught expert. But as I spoke I went to meet her -- as I started my mechanical leg giving out an ominous creak (I had omitted to oil it, like watches and clocks these things require lubrication). I seized her stiffly round the body. All of her still passably lissom person -- on the slight side -- gave. It was the human willow, more or less. It fled into the hard argument of my muscular pressures. Her waist broke off and vanished into me as I took her over in waspish segments, an upper and nether. The bosoms and head settled like a trio of hefty birds upon the upper slopes of my militant trunk: a headless nautilus on the other hand settled upon my middle, and attacked my hams with its horrid tentacles -- I could feel the monster of the slimy submarine-bottoms grinding away beneath, headless and ravenous.
>
> "Oh Listerine!" I sighed, as I compressed the bellows of her rib-box, squeezing it in and out -- it crushed up to a quite handy

> compass -- expanding, and then expelling her bad breath. I put my face down beside her ear (I wished I'd brought her a bottle from the States as a useful present).[142] (The italics are mine.)

Snooty's sadistic sexual images, his verbal violence and callousness are, not surprisingly, parallelled by repeated unkindnesses to Val, in terms of his actions toward, and social treatment of her.[143] Snooty's psychic sadism and violence as well as his sexual callousness, so well revealed to the reader by the images with which he describes Val and his passionate contacts with her, are all the more shocking because they refer to a woman with whom this man is *habitually* intimate. Thus, the reader must readily question what is, for Snooty, the meaning of such intimacy. In this typically open-ended and subtle way, Lewis is clearly examining the nature of such male sexuality -- since intimacy of this kind is an essential ingredient in all human sexuality, and in its active expression.[144]

Lewis shows us, then, by direct exposition of the image of Val which Snooty creates, and to which he responds -- to the apparent exclusion of her reality -- that Snooty's psychic apparatus for interacting with others, as well as his sexuality and its direction, are all highly brutal and brutalizing. Lewis seems to imply, by the action of the book, rather than through the delusory network of Snooty's consciousness, that, unfortunately, Val ultimately allows herself to be brutalized in turn by Snooty's psychic brutalization, and to become also callous and irresponsible on the psychic and social levels. This fact is indicated, in terms of her actual actions, and in terms of the plot of the novel, when Val insists on lying about the truth concerning Snooty's murder of Humph (his manager), even though these lies serve no useful purpose whatever.[145] These lies are useless since, even though Snooty owns up to the murder, he, ironically, goes free and unpunished -- another example of the psychopath's imperviousness to the laws and punishments of society which has astounded researchers.[146] Especially in view of this paradox by which society does not manage to enforce its sanctions against the criminal behaviour by the psychopath, Val's continued lies concerning Snooty's real guilt are rendered, ironically, proof of her own infection with one of the principal features of her consort's psychopathy -- social and spiritual guiltlessness. They are also proof of her own psychic brutalization by Snooty, and the contagious irresponsibility with which she is infected as a result of her commitment to him. The fact that this psychic corrosion is mutual, and is ultimately shared by both the male and female when either party is sufficiently committed to, and therefore influenced by, the other, is again a reflection of the fact that, in Lewis's work, we are continually reminded that the male and the female principles are never mutually exclusive, but are, rather, inextricably inter-twined.

Lewis makes further investigation of the distortions of male sexuality through his investigation of Snooty's espousal of the mystique of _machismo_. This latter, and most damaging, idiosyncracy of Snooty's is revealed in his romantic identification of himself with the Hemingwayesque writer figure Rob McPhail, in an exclusive, all-male fantasy. Snooty's indulgence in this fantasy[147] is not only describable in terms of the _macho_ inter-male identification, but is also a clue to his own lack of a real sense of self. Furthermore, this indulgence can be seen as revealing the ambiguities of his own sexuality. In view of the fact that McPhail enjoys the supermasculine glamour of bullfighting, and has freely embarked upon this sport, accepting the images that accompany it, the following passage reveals Snooty's lack of a sense of the external reality of others, in particular, McPahil's, despite his apparent admiration of the latter. The passage also reveals the blind arrogance with which Snooty imposes his own values on others, the better to admire them, since by so doing he can further admire his own perception and values:

> I have sufficiently explained the nature of my pact with Nature. My friends the bulls would I trusted rout these modern Mithrases. But in this instance I suffered from divided counsels, because of the part Rob was to play. Rob was my good friend. But some sixth sense I had told me in confidence that Rob's view of the matter was not at bottom so very different from my own. He was more like the original Mithras I felt certain, than he was like the modern matador. He had been ordered to kill the bull no doubt. Or he considered that he had been instructed to kill the bull. But it went very much against the grain, as in the case of Mithras, of that I was positive. At heart -- I could have sworn it -- he was not upon the side of Man! He was like me, a parent of Leviathan. But that he would, very naturally, make it his business to disguise.[148]

In this passage, we see that, despite the obvious meaning of Rob's pursuit of the sport of bullfighting, Snooty nonetheless persists in admiring his own private fantasy of himself and Rob as perceptive rebels on the side of nature. A similarly unbelievable blindness is conveyed in the following passage, where Lewis shows the fully unrealistic, and highly fantastic extent of Snooty's wilful identification with Rob, in terms of an all-male, supermasculine, macho solidarity:

> Rob McPhail is of our scottish stock. That may go for something. But whether or no it is the bred in the bone business at the bottom of it, the likeness in our respective ways of feeling (on a number of points) is exceedingly marked. I am astonished at the likeness. It is on account of this I value him so much I think. I feel towards him

> as I should towards a brother. -- Now like myself Rob is an actor -- he is the artist in action. He purges himself daily in make-believe. I am the man-of-action incarnate. So is he. But I _act_ at being in action. And he too! What man-of-action has not? Lord Nelson was a famous _actor_. Any ship's rating in his fleet was the common or garden 'man-of-action' in that brutish sense). I am not a brute. I am _conscious_ of my actions. In a word, I am a Behaviorist.[149]

Here, Snooty confirms the ultimately narcissistic nature of his admiration of Rob -- this is ironically inferred by Lewis. He also confirms what students of Psychology have long stressed[150] -- the fact that the psychopath is very lucid, self-conscious and quite aware of the nature of his actions -- a fact that will have much relevance with regard to Snooty's cold-blooded shooting of his friend and agent, Humph, later in the book.

Snooty's patronizing, exclusive, and supermasculine identification with McPhail is re-emphasized in the following passage:

> Fighting and running away are not here in question -- neither Rob nor I are of the stuff that is ever likely to show a clean pair of heels. (We are not fugitives -- we are _pursuers_.) Rather it is a question of the category of action selected (by the man-of-action become conscious, and therefore _actor_) and the terms upon which one engages in it. And in that we are nothing short of siamese twins, he and I. Our life is permanent _mensur_. (Did I lose my leg, sir, in a _mensur_? No sir, I lost that in a _massacre_ -- that is another story.) In pursuit of the solid sensations, we have suddenly found ourselves engaged in Faujas -- beginning in the great nearby port of Marseilles, though _Duty First_ is still our watchword. We are now in the company of that famous opium-eater, the big word-workman, we are together with him, in quest for the Solid, we touch it with our finger-tips, we are actually _above the melée-to-be_ inhaling the same cubic feet of atmosphere as the nostrils of the actors, or were just now, the dangerous quadrupeds. We are the togaed ones laughing (of the senatorial caste, the great Freed-men) above the death-pit of the circus -- we are if anything Neros who go down into the Mortuary playground, hedged-in by gladiators, we are the ones whose thumbs are erected or depressed. _We_ scorn the reality. _We_ are not animal! In fine it is that. Whatever we may be, we are not one of the fools that bleed and die. Or if we bleed and die, we do not do so to childish ends -- we do so to some lofty effect. -- We do not succumb in football matches![151]

Lewis multiplies the ironies of this passage, full of snobbish narcissism and fantastic identification, by the fact that McPhail _does_ eventually die as a result of the bullfight, shattered by the bull, and that his _is_ a most gratuitous, unnecessary, and violent death.

Clearly, Lewis is exploring the nature of the cult of supermasculinity or _machismo_, and its human effects. He shows that this peculiarly non-androgynous and isolative mode of consciousness and identification is basically accompanied by an inability to relate to the emotions of others, so locked into its own style is such a consciousness. Thus Lewis also indicates that Snooty's espousal of the supermasculine mystique represents an unrealistic suppression of humane self and of humane emotion. As a result of this fact, Lewis shows that Snooty projects his own feelings unto others in a way which reveals a disconcerting lack of any sense of external reality and of otherness. Lewis demonstrates this habit, (and its effects in terms of growing callousness and immunity to the reality of others' humanity and their accompanying emotions) in Snooty's response to the grief-stricken Mrs. McPhail, and to the whole accident which takes McPhail's life. With regard to the accident, in which his friend's head is smashed by the bull, and its aftermath of confusion and panic, Lewis shows that Snooty reacts with unnecessary verbal sophistry, and an overriding and astonishing _boredom_ -- a boredom which continually marks Snooty's response to people and situations which make an emotional demand on him:[152]

> I cannot say that I stood back with anything but a bad grace. Indeed the attitude of everyone towards this ridiculous accident irritated me. The wife's kneeling figure (a fatuous Hollywood wax-work it seemed to my irritated senses), the physician's frowning fuss as he made his examination -- I made no exceptions! One was as bad as the other. Seeing that beforehand they had all consented to it -- seeing they had assisted to promote these pretty results -- since they were part of a system of life committed to encourage such meaningless energies -- their behavior (looked at from the standpoint of the profession of 'Behavior') was only calculated to induce contempt. -- I am not ashamed to say that as I stood back I yawned. Frankly I was bored! I should not have been the man I am if I had been anything else. -- This was very bad indeed.[153]

Lewis shows that Snooty is dimly aware of the inappropriateness of his response, but that this moment of awareness is, as always, glibly rationalized with his customary narcissistic sophistry. However, through Snooty himself, Lewis raises a question which the reader must inevitably consider -- namely, is Snooty to be best seen as a war casualty himself, perhaps suffering from the after-effects of some form of brain damage? Of course, Snooty does not conceptualize this question in these terms -- but he does show a moment of awareness of the shortcomings of his own brutalized sensibility -- a brutalization which Lewis shows us clearly, is only one result of the savagery and inhumanity of war.[154] Thus, Snooty muses:

> As to McPhail, it is perhaps an odd thing, for which I cannot entirely account. But I experienced practically no trace of that human sympathy that was I suppose to be anticipated (in a European). The War accustomed me to death too much -- that may be it. It is the first thing that occurs to one. I had seen too many bodies lying in that strange and rather irritating repose, mutilated but peaceful -- the debris of attacks. Or I was too brutally indifferent to myself. Which? (How important the self is, upon that I need not insist.) I was very indifferent. Of course I understood that he was dangerously injured. But he was the same dangerously injured and lying at death's door perhaps, on his back (to all intents and purposes an absentee) as he was up and about, conscious and functioning. -- That is perfectly good 'Behavior.' That is absolutely routine Watson.[155]

Here, Lewis demonstrates the fact that Snooty responds to an emotionally demanding situation with bored irritation. The inappropriateness of this response to his friend's disaster is another indication of the degree of Snooty's incapacity to love -- one of the basically psychopathic qualities which indelibly mark Lewis's delineation of his character. In view of all this, it is not surprising that, immediately after the accident, we find Snooty in the melée, however inadvertently, stepping on his mortally injured friend's body.[156] One cannot help feeling (especially as this incident is followed by the most arrogant hostilities on Snooty's part towards the doctor who is trying to get near to Rob so that he can examine his injury) that this scene is another example of Lewis's use of visually presented dramatic irony. This symbolic vignette, almost a loaded tabloid, is typical of Lewis's dramatic art, his method of presenting in a single quintessential image, all the important factors in a given incident or character.[157]

In delineating Snooty's response to McPhail's injury, Lewis demonstrates the link between the machismo cult and a complete abdication of natural feelings, in the effort to achieve a suitably supermasculine level of indifference. Thus, Snooty sums up the fact of Rob's injury, and obviously imminent death as follows:

> ". . . This accident is extremely unpleasant. But from the standpoint of Duty what it means is that McPhail cannot come to Persia, that is all. That point is settled. We have no further business here."[158]

Lewis makes it clear that Snooty's effort at control or detachment merely equates with an astounding callousness and narcissism, which lead to the coldest lack of appropriate response or "natural" emotion. This is a portrait of psychopathic alienation from natural emotions, also a portrait of a peculiarly male type of egoism -- male, because the supermasculine ethic of a male-dominated society reinforces this type of alienated emotional behaviour, disguising as stoicism or male courage what is in fact merely indifference or callousness. As such, if we accept the merely social definitions of machismo, we will miss the fact that this definition can hide a basically psychopathic alienation from humane emotion. Lewis indicates this point very clearly in his portrayal of Snooty's reactions to his friend's catastrophe; therefore, these issues are at the base of his exploration of the particularly alienated character or personality type which we can see as represented in the figure of Snooty Baronet. This personality type has been called the "Psychopath." We may simply paraphrase this term by labelling Snooty as Lewis's "symbolic monster puppet." As such, Snooty represents an image of the ego gone berserk, in such a way that the individual becomes the monstrous creation of his own ego.[159]

At this point in our examination, then, the question must inevitably arise as to whether Snooty's characterization is to be regarded as a completely symbolic structure. Partly mechanical and functional (as represented in the fact of his wooden leg and silver head plate), and partly organic and natural, he can surely be seen as a symbol of the conflict between the functional and the organic in life.[160] His yawn, itself an automatic organic reaction, is the nihilistic epitome of this conflict.[161] Ironically, also, his yawn is the naturally automatic and spontaneous reaction which symbolizes Snooty's immense psychic ennui, and overwhelming emotional sterility. It is also the paradoxical symbol of the fact that, behaviourist as Snooty may wish to be, it is still impossible for him to program his organic reactions.[162] Snooty's yawn is the symbol of what Lewis elsewhere calls the "organic snag"[163] -- the claims of the organic and natural, resonating within even the most mechanized or programmed figures or situations. Significantly, the Hatter's Dummy, the appallingly lifelike and "human" mechanism which temporarily shocks Snooty out of his own alienated ennui,[164] may be interpreted as Lewis's use of a symbolic icon, a replication of Snooty as such (that is, as himself, a monstrous puppet). In this sense, then, both Snooty and the Hatter's Dummy are duplicate icons -- symbols of the person, who, by ironic co-operation between external, mechanizing circumstance (such as war), and the inner machinations of his own untrammelled, blind egotism, becomes the monstrous creation of his own will, more technological than natural, more puppet than actor, more monstrous than human, or humane.

Lewis makes clear the fact of Snooty's essentially mechanical and mechanized nature by means of this duplicating of icons between Snooty himself and the milliner's puppet, displayed in the store window. Indeed, Snooty's psychic ennui is momentarily shaken by this automaton: shatteringly, Lewis shows Snooty himself in this astonishingly lifelike, programmed mechanical figure. For the first time, we see Snooty reacting with real emotion as opposed to mere irritability. (The only other time when Snooty reacts with equal spontaneity occurs, interestingly, after he has shot his manager, Humph, in cold blood.)[165] Clearly, self-revelation only shakes Snooty's psychic _ennui_; only violence can relieve it. Lewis describes Snooty's reactions to the astonishingly lifelike performance of the hatter's mannequin as follows:

> As for the puppet, he went through his evolutions over and over again -- each cycle was quite elaborate. I watched him with a painful amazement, attempting to penetrate what he meant, by being what he was. I had replaced my hat -- I again removed it, as it happened it was just as he was taking off his. The fellow who was standing at my elbow had been watching me in the plate-glass window I think -- I suppose I had pushed him. He had I suppose remarked that I was _partly_ mechanical myself. My leg had not escaped his attention in short [sic] it seemed to me, and now something about my manner appeared to amuse him. I became conscious of this. He was looking at _me_, instead of at the puppet. Of course this must have been because of my expression. I was not surprised of course, nor do I mind such creatures examining me as if I were of another clay. That is all in the day's work -- the day's _field-work_.[166]

Snooty's ruminations on the mechanical perfection of the puppet, as opposed to the functional, human imperfection of his friend and manager, Humph, and indeed, of _all_ humanity, continue as follows:

> I had begun smiling to myself as I thought of Humph. And then the puppet turned to me, bowed from the waist, and, raising his hat, smiled in the most formal and agreeable way possible. The fellow was playacting -- and what I resented in this comedy was the fact that I knew (or thought I knew) that he was not _real_. There was something abstruse and unfathomable in this automaton. Beside me a new arrival smiled back at the bowing Hatter's doll. I turned towards him in alarm. Was not perhaps this fellow who had come up beside me a puppet too? I could not swear that he was not! I turned my eyes away from him, back to the smiling phantom in the window, with intense uneasiness. For I thought to myself as I caught sight of him in the glass, smiling away in response to our mechanical friend, _certainly he is a puppet too_! Of course he was, but dogging that was the brother-thought, _but equally so am I_! And so I was (a very thoughtful and important puppet -- wandering in this sinister thoroughfare, in search of an american Club-sandwich -- a place in my bread-basket, scooped out in wind, the size of a small melon like a plaster mould).[167]

Snooty's alarmed and painful response to this revelation of himself among his fellow human beings as puppet and mechanism culminates in his taking refuge in the reassurance of alcohol and of sexual contact:

> -- I continued on my way to the Luncheon-bar. I had a double whisky as soon as I reached it. *Immediately I thought of Lily, and in the light of all that had just occurred I understood why it was I so greatly preferred her*, and I made out a telegram then and there. *That night I insisted we should be together*.[168]

Further examination of Lewis's externalization of Snooty's character hinges on the important question: to what extent is this story a conscious delineation of a psychopath, or, at least, a partial psychopath? In view of the fact that Lewis projects Snooty as murdering his manager, Humph, in cold blood (cleverly, and impulsively exploiting the "cover" provided by the kidnap scene which Humph himself has planned -- ironically enough), we must view Snooty as both criminal and psychopathic. Thus, the publicity-gimmick kidnap scene which Humph has planned to gain publicity for Snooty's upcoming book on Persia has *back-fired*, literally, as Snooty uses the occasion as a cover for his own homicidal actions. The cold-blooded and deliberate nature of his shooting of Humph is very obvious in the casual callousness of Snooty's own description of the incident:

> I cannot tell you upon what impulse I acted, but lifting my rifle I brought it down till it was trained just short of the rim of his white puggaree, and fired. In the general confusion my action went unnoticed. I saw Humph pitch forward upon his pony, he was hit. Then I fired a second shot, and you may believe me or not, but *of all the shots I have ever fired, at all the game I have ever hunted (and this includes the hippopotamus) I don't believe that any shot ever gave me so much pleasure as that second one, at old Humph's shammyleathered, gussetted stern*, before he rolled off his pony and bit the dust. *(The first was great fun -- it was almost automatic*. I scarcely knew I was doing it. *But I knew all about the second*.)[169] (The italics are mine.)

The complete callousness of Snooty's murder of Humph is further emphasized in Snooty's final comments on the incident:

> I was glad we were leaving Humph behind. That gave me a great deal of pleasure. He was dead, he was of no more use to anyone than an old waterlogged hat. He had ceased his troubling. I had not got over my enjoyment as regards the second of those shots yet. Indeed it is fair to say I think that I shall never lose that pleasant feeling of immediate satisfaction -- the sting of pleasure like the ping of a rifle, is as fresh as a daisy, at this moment. It will never lose that quality -- _Time cannot dull, use cannot_ whatever it is! -- A thing of beauty is a joy forever! That second one was _a beauty_![170]

Obviously, every criminal is not a psychopath, or _vice-versa_. But is the average criminal or murderer as completely guiltless as Snooty, who glories in his own bloody action with the lucid callousness expressed in the foregoing quotations? No -- this guiltlessness is specifically the mark of the psychopathically violent or criminal personality.[171] Snooty's lack of guilt or remorse, or any sense of moral wrong-doing, is clear in his self-righteousness, and his absolute sense of self-justification, and especially in the pleasure he takes in describing his murderous act. Lewis again demonstrates these qualities of moral irresponsibility in the ease with which Snooty dumps the ailing Val,[172] despite her previous, ill-advised, loyalty to himself. On the social level, his absolute self-justification is parallelled by the fact that, even though Snooty arrogantly tells the truth concerning Humph's death, no-one takes the matter seriously, and he escapes punishment. Ironically, again, Snooty's attempts to reveal the truth concerning the incidents in Persia are merely dismissed as the fantasies born of exhaustion or tension:

> Mrs. Ritter's version is, as you know, the version that is generally accepted as true. I have written to England to give up my baronetcy for instance, but have met with a refusal on behalf of His Majesty,

> who is pleased to consider that I would do well to go into a nursing-home for a month or so, and is persuaded that after suitable treatment I would emerge in my right senses and become once more a normal member of the caledonian aristocracy, against whose fair name no breath of suspicion had ever successfully blown -- I have been _unhinged_ (that is the expression, as if I were a door) by my experiences. I require _a rest_, that is the idea. -- And meanwhile Val is getting much kudos out of her attitude.[173]

Inevitably, aristocratic society protects its own. Snooty, psychopathic murderer or not, is a baronet, a war hero and a famous author. As such, he is sacrosant, even when he confesses his own guilt. This escape from society's sanctions and punishments is another irony which typifies the situation of the psychopath.[174] Thus, also, the final irony of the novel is the fact that Snooty, a psychopathic murderer, free and unpunished, becomes a celebrated writer, who is well rewarded socially and financially.[175] At this point, also, we may see Lewis as satirically exploring the potentialities of the theme of the writer as psychopath. Simultaneously, he is raising the question which must occur to the reader, as it must also to the psycho-analyst or sociologist confronted with the paradox of the socially elusive and successful psychopath. This question is: "Is this man really _mad_? Is his apparent lucidity and ability to manipulate the sanctions of society merely a mask for complete insanity?" Further, Lewis seems to be asking whether Snooty, as the figure of the successful psychopath, is merely the symbolic judgement on a society which _itself_ must indeed be mad to allow this type of man to roam free.

Lewis has clearly depicted Snooty as a basically isolated and anti-humanist individual, who does not, or cannot, love[176] either women or other men. The same hostility extended to his sexual partner, Val, is extended to his manager, Humph. He patronizes the guileless Lily, and his apparently admiring friendship with the writer-friend Rob McPhail emerges, on closer examination, as merely a narcissistic identification. On the one hand, Snooty murders Humph, his manager and ostensible friend, who has ingeniously (and rather too deviously) planned the advancement of Snooty's career as a writer, and on the other hand, he continues empty and predatory sexual contacts with women whom he does not respect or may not *like*. Lewis shows Snooty's attachment to females as both predatory and atavistic, an attachment pursued even though he often responds to actual sex with *apparently* psychosomatic headaches, nausea and vomiting.

The morning after his tryst with Val, Snooty confides to the reader:

> So I was not at all well. My head always gives me trouble at the moment of the climax under the silver plate. *That* always lays me out. But generally by the time morning has come round everything is once more O.K. I am sick and then I sleep.[177]

Similarly, Snooty's own description of the actual sexual contact with Val, and its nauseated aftermath, is as follows:

> Owing to that unaccountable feminine aversion for all that is direct (perhaps a hall-mark of our time) I am reluctantly compelled at this point to break off my narrative. But it is only necessary to skip a matter of ten minutes, perhaps a quarter of an hour. No very long time at all had elapsed certainly, when the folding-doors once more came violently open, pulled from the inside on this occasion. A one-legged man hopped out. He was as naked as God ushered him into the world and as the Grave [sic] will take him back. Sitting down upon the end of the settee, and bending over the gilt-flowered slop-vessel, this man proceeded to be ill. For the best part of a further quarter of an hour he continued to be ill. Eventually he sank into an arm-chair, whose big square hollow shelf fronted the fireplace. Repeatedly he carried his hand to that part of his skull where there was a silver plate.

> That one-legged naked man in the sumptuous second-hand Chelsea arm-chair -- carrying his hand, as if in pain, to a spot upon the rear portion of his skull -- within his abundant corn-yellow crest-lines -- was me. (Upon my opening page I had to introduce myself, as you will recall. This time again I have to perform that office, as you might otherwise not have recognized me unclothed.)[178]

Here, Lewis may well be exploring the possibility that Snooty is suffering from brain injury of some sort, or from the nervous after-effects of such. Important questions are implied concerning whether the after-effects of brain damage, rather than pure alienation, are at the base of Snooty's psychopathic behaviour. Lewis tells us that Snooty wears a silver plate in or on his head, where he sustained an injury while in the army, and that he gets severe headaches, nausea and vomiting after sexual activity and the accompanying excitement. Is Lewis suggesting some physiological and neurological reason for Snooty's alienated behaviour? Or are we to conclude that Snooty's literal sexual nausea is simply symbolic and psychosomatic? These questions are, of course, a real part of the enigma of the psychopath -- is the psychopath psychically or physiologically ill? This is a question which remains unresolved by Lewis, as by others.[179]

However, Snooty's sexual nausea (whether taken literally or symbolically) is counterbalanced by his predatory and cold-blooded sexual attitudes. This approach to sexual attraction and response is clearly revealed by Lewis, when we see Snooty at home with Lily, whom he scrutinizes and analyzes from a coldly physical standpoint, as if she were indeed meat on a block. Clearly, there is nothing egalitarian in Snooty's response to the sensuous Lily; his detached and somewhat condescending itemization of her body, loaded as this study is with racial and sexist overtones, proves this:

> "How do you feel now Mikey?" Lily asked.
> "Much better" grinning heavily I answered and ran a fresh forearm about her slinky hip, and walked her into the next room left-right! left-right! -- like a mechanical dollie, where the fire was, until we stood in front of it, when I began undressing her and she was helping me. Lily soon was undressed and naked, she was the sweetest milk-white packet of flesh that ever chirped upon a hearth-rug or fed out of a he-man's hand. Last but not least she did just suggest the full-grown female, I think in something sultry about the joints. Maybe she's pupped, I never asked her. I knew she'd tell me and I didn't want to know that. (In Africa and Texas I had seen faint tallow-stains they seemed, like hers, which meant nigger -- beneath the nordic fleur-de-lys. That's why I called her Fleur-de-lys -- I pronounced it Ferdaleece. But now I come to think, there was something mulatto in her strong over-chiselled lips, and in her sky-gazing bosoms -- but in colour as white as expensive parchment, they were proper 'hills of snow.')[180] (The italics are mine.)

Snooty has chosen to conduct his relationship with the working-class Lily incognito, so to speak, for it is only by accident (an accident which annoys Snooty greatly)[181] that Lily discovers his real identity. The images with which Snooty describes Lily in the above passage, are Lewis's indication of the fact that Snooty sees Lily in anonymous, non-human terms, as voluptuous flesh, rather than as a person whom he enjoys knowing. In fact, Snooty obviously avoids such knowledge of her, as is manifest in his concealment of his true identity from her, and in his expressed disinterest in the circumstances of her sexual past. This attitude is made explicit in the word "pupped," with its anti-humanistic implications, reveals the precisely impersonal, and depersonalizing nature of Snooty's attitude to Lily. Yet, it is to this very woman's sensuousness and warmth that Snooty turns, opportunistically, in his moment of panic, when he needs reassurance in the face of the grim message of the Hatter's Dummy. Clearly, Snooty may enjoy the sensuousness of Lily's sexuality, but he is as disinterested in the realities of her fertility (and the human implications of this) as he is in the possibilities of her personhood. To him, she is simply an exotic and comforting sex object. As it is symbolized in Snooty's setting up of his relationship with Lily *incognito*, Lewis clarifies a disturbing point in a portrait of a man whose ego may depend, for reassurance, on heterosexual relationships, but who cannot, or will not, relate to a female's human reality, because the only knowledge of a woman which he seeks is carnal.

These factors are also duplicated in Snooty's response to Val's disclosure of her attachment to, and nostalgia for, himself, on her discovery that he has been to China, during his protracted absence from England:

> "When I was in China" I said.
> "Have you been in China?" I was interrupted at once.
> "Oh yes."
> "You might have sent me a postcard."
> "A postcard?"
> "Yes a postcard."
> "Would a postcard have conveyed anything about China!"
> "Perhaps not. But still. It was you not China." [sic]
> "Oh ah!" I yawned -- I was absolutely certain that Butler would have said *Oh ah*. He must have said *Oh ah*. He couldn't have gone on like that for ten years without often saying *Oh ah*.
>
> But this was very bad! What was coming to the old girl! For a moment I looked at her with suspicion, in exactly the way Butler would have scrutinized Jenny, if she had heaved a certain sort of melodious sigh -- one in short that blew up from unprofessional horizons and whispered sadly of a Little Grey Home in the West, with Butler paying the rent.
>
> This was very bad indeed. Was it possible that a certain objectionable rite had substituted itself in Val's feeble mind for the more honourable sentiments of a bohemian high-brow "bit" (which was her favourite word for tart)? Perish that thought! This is the point at which I drew out the pound. I put my hand in my note-pocket and, drawing out the pound, put it down between us on the table, continuing of course to eat anything I could find, which was not much.[182]

Again, Lewis makes clear Snooty's incapacity for sincere response to tenderness, or the hint of tenderness in a woman: busy with his own fantastic role-playing (yet another game with which Snooty distracts himself from emotional reality in this relationship), Snooty is irritated and nonplussed by the possibility of a loving, unfeigned response in Val. Again, he projects his own attitude on to others -- he would find it easier to see her as a fashionable whore, than as a loving woman, because she is too challenging to his habitual psychic apathy in this latter role. Symbolically, he distracts attention from his own confusion by creating the cheapening interruption of producing the ponnd-note which he owes her. It is symptomatic of the level of Snooty's emotional sterility that, when faced with an emotional challenge by a woman who obviously cares for him, he takes refuge in haggling about money, since Lewis, and ourselves as readers, are no doubt aware of the dynamic and often ravaging, effects of the interaction of men, women, and money.[183]

Conclusion

Thus, like Kreisler and Tarr, and also like René (Self Condemned), Snooty seeks the essentials of comfort, reassurance and sustenance from women, without giving (or indeed, being able to give) any of these in return. Instead, Snooty is simply a sexual predator or psychic sadist with women. Similarly, his negative relationships with women are merely the mirror for Snooty's basically antihumanist (or "psychopathic") response to reality. In Snooty, Lewis presents us with the enigma of the psychopath, as well as the enigma of humanism and anti-humanism. Lewis also makes it clear that Snooty's sexuality (specifically male) complicates and affects this enigma. If the reader sees Snooty as somewhere at the core of a pattern composed of portraits of different types of male alienation -- which are variously represented in Tarr, Kreisler, René, and Pullman (The Human Age) -- then Snooty, in ways which surpass these other portraits, may seem to represent the self-created monster born of the ego run wild, Lewis's awful personification of the Wild Mind.[184] Conversely, the characters Tarr, Kreisler, René and Pullman all represent other stages in this continuum of alienation, all sharing, in different degrees, in the psychopathic principle embodied in Snooty Baronet. Therefore, Lewis uses the portrait of Snooty to illuminate centrally these other characters, and the pattern of emotional pathology which they in turn embody. Seen in context of this pattern of progressive alienation, Snooty must be recognized as a monstrous symbol of the horrible consequences of an untrammelled egotism. As such, the characterization of Snooty may be seen as a core structure, instructive in our understanding of Lewis's exploration of the subtle connections between self-concept, perception, and psycho-sexual alienation as definitive factors in a complex process representing some peculiarly male types of dehumanization.

Footnotes

[126] Cf. Cleckley, The Mask of Sanity, 369 and 379.

[127] See Cleckley, op. cit.; Hare, Psychopathy: Theory and Research, and Cf. McCord and McCord, The Psychopath: An Essay on the Criminal Mind.

[128] McCord and McCord, op. cit., 3.

[129] Cf. McCord and McCord, op. cit., 12-15 and 16-20, and Hare, op. cit., 7.

[130] Cf. Cleckley, 395-396, McCord and McCord, 15-16 and 220, and Hare, 7.

[131] McCord and McCord, 20.

[132] J. Swift, Gulliver's Travels.

[133] A. Camus, The Outsider (or L'Étranger).

[134] Cf. Swift, op. cit., 316, 322-323 and McCord and McCord, op. cit., 8.

[135] Cf. Cleckley, 380-381, and McCord and McCord, op. cit., on the Borlov case, 5-8.

[136] Lewis, Snooty Baronet, 1-2.

[137] McCord and McCord, op. cit., 5-8.

[138] Lewis, Snooty Baronet, 9-10.

[139] Ibid., 31-32.

[140] Ibid., 36-37.

[141] Ibid., 44-45.

[142] Ibid., 45-46.

[143] In this regard, see Snooty's reluctance to introduce Val to the McPhail party (see Snooty Baronet, 174), and his lewd and ill-bred remarks in French about Val to the hotel workers, 225-226.

[144] See the gratuitous nastiness of Snooty's descriptions of Val, Ibid., 17-18, 31-32, and 181.

[145] Ibid., 308.

[146] C.R. Smith, The Psychopath in Society.

[147] Compare Snooty's childish role-playing as Samuel Butler, when visiting Val, Ibid., 14-17 and 20.

[148] Ibid., 180.

[149] Ibid., 182-183.

[150] Cf. Cleckley, The Mask of Sanity.

[151] Snooty Baronet, 183-184.

[152] Cf. Materer's comments on Snooty's recurring yawn, in Wyndham Lewis the Novelist, 110-111.

[153] Snooty Baronet, 216-217.

[154] Cf. Materer, op. cit., 106-107, and 109-112.

[155] Snooty Baronet, 217.

[156] Ibid., 216.

[157] Cf. Lewis's final description of René in the closing paragraph of the novel Self Condemned, 407.

[158] Snooty Baronet, 228.

[159] Professor Sheila Watson, in seminar, in the Department of English, University of Alberta.

[160] Cf. Materer, op. cit., 102-105.

[161] Ibid., 110.

[162] Professor Sheila Watson, in consultation.

[163] Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, 232.

[164] See Snooty Baronet, 158-164.

[165] Ibid., 290 and 298.

[166] Ibid., 158.

[167] Ibid., 159-160.

[168] Ibid., 164.

[169] Ibid., 290. (Compare A. Camus, The Outsider, 64.)

[170] Ibid., 298.

[171] On the freedom from guilt which is typical of the psychopath, see McCord and McCord, The Psychopath.

[172] Snooty Baronet, 305-306.

[173] Ibid., 308.

[174] See J.D. Page, Psychopathology: The Science of Understanding Deviance.

[175] Snooty Baronet, 307.

[176] McCord and McCord, op. cit., on the psychopathic inability to love.

[177] Snooty Baronet, 49.

[178] Ibid., 47-48.

[179] C. Shagass, S. Gershon and A.J. Friedhoff, eds., Psychopathology and Brain Dysfunction.

[180] Ibid., 127-128.

[181] Ibid., 129-131.

[182] Ibid., 19-20.

[183] See P. Chesler and E.J. Goodman, Women, Money and Power.

[184] For this play on words, compare Lewis's essay on "The Meaning of the Wild Body," in The Wild Body collection, 243-250, with the following extract from Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem (#42, Penguin text) which starts: "No worst, there is none"; the second stanza begins:

> O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
> Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
> May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long
> our small
> Durance deal with that steep or deep.

(Penguin edition of the Selection of Hopkins's poems, edited by W.H. Gardner, page 61, poem #42, lines 9-12.)

If we relate this poem to Lewis's theory of "The Wild Body" and to our analyses of his male characters in this chapter, it will be clear that not only are these male figures personifications of "The Wild Body," moreover, they are, so to speak, lost forever in the mountains of the even wilder mind.

CHAPTER IV

FEMALE CHAUVINISM AND *THE RED PRIEST*

Jane and Mary

The novel *The Red Priest* (first published in 1956) tells the story of Father Augustine Card, an embattled cleric of aristocratic lineage, who arrogantly determines to convert the genteel congregation of the parish of St. Catherine and the Angels to his own questionable brand of pseudo-Communism and Christianity. Card is the model of the upper-middle-class radical, who, embarked on a sensation-seeking, egotistical effort to convince others of his own ill-conceived and confused ideologies, abuses his position as spiritual leader of a community in order to pursue his own self-willed quest for power. Card represents the familiar Lewisian megalomaniac, who suffers from an "excess of will."[1] He is also a type of the Hitler-figure, observed elsewhere[2] by Lewis. In this novel, Lewis deals with one of his major preoccupations, namely, power -- its meaning, its uses and its abuse, in a world which is in a state of transition. This preoccupation is explored in this novel by the examination which it offers of what we now call "sexual politics" in the relationships between men and women, in the context of larger power relationships, with which the former are inextricately bound. Furthermore, Lewis explores the role of money as a source of power in human interaction, and, in particular, as an expression and source of power in an emotional relationship between male and female. (The man in this case is Father Card; the woman is Mary Chillingham, who becomes his wife.)

Through the figure of Mary, Lewis further explores the effects of class security, intelligence, advanced education, and financial wealth on the female, in terms of her response to these as sources of power which she may or may not be able to utilize creatively. In fact, the implications of the acquisition of wealth by an educated, socially well-placed, beautiful young woman form some of the main threads of the novel, as Mary, already a very beautiful, well-educated and aristocratic, but financially dependent, young woman, inherits a large sum of money. How this acquisition of unexpected wealth affects Mary's view of herself and of reality is a main theme in the novel. Lewis makes clear, in terms of the action of the novel, that, though this woman gains the socio-economic power that comes with financial independence, she lacks the larger power that comes with a sense of emotional autonomy, and the growth of self-knowledge. On the other hand, Card represents an upper-middle-class male with an over-developed and undisciplined sense of self, who lacks the financial resources that are required to transform into reality his fantastic interpretations of religion and politics. In short, Card is a power-seeker who has neither the money nor the patience needed to facilitate his power quest.

The novel ends somewhat distressingly. Lewis seems to indicate that neither of the main protagonists has resolved the particular dilemma which he or she has faced. Card falls victim to his own misuse of physical power (violence), as he is murdered in retaliation for one of the two murders which he himself has committed. On the other hand, Mary remains unable to resolve the problem of power represented by her wealth, which she has unwisely believed to be a panacea for the pain of life's challenge to autonomy, creativity and self-development. Unable to find creative and positive ways of facing these challenges, Mary takes refuge in the traditional role of child-bearing, and proceeds to use her offspring as a pawn, in the continuing battle with her husband. Symbolically, she names "Zero" the second child born from the emotionally sterile union. From the fact that this naming is used as the culminating statement of the novel,[3] it seems safe to infer that Lewis is implying certain truths about the female response to the challenge of autonomy and self development (variously termed by feminist sociologists, the "fear of success").[4] Symbolically, Mary represents the female figure in search of sexual fulfilment as well as intellectual and emotional development. However, she submerges her own urge to success (represented in the desire for intellectual activity and emotional independence) in her marriage to Card, the flashy, but intellectually and morally insubstantial, male figure. Similarly, in the unplanned conception and birth of Mary's second child, Zero, we can see Lewis as depicting a further nihilistic abdication of the quest for self-development, and a further capitulation to the concept of biology as destiny. For a woman of Mary's potential, the birth of this symbolically-named child is an admission of her indulgence in what was an unsatisfying relationship, and another manifestation of the vagaries of the sexual power-struggle. As the child's name implies, there has been no resolution of this arid power struggle between Mary and her husband, not even in the latter's death. At the end of the novel, with her two children, Mary withdraws to plantation life in Kenya, where, it seems logical to infer, she will pursue increased colonial wealth,[5] as a further act of nihilism and atavism. (At this point, money is simply her defense against life.) Such nihilism and atavism, Lewis also seems to hint, are the fate of gifted women such as Mary, who submerge the need for the development of their own human potential in favor of the limited goals of an uncreative interaction with male partners who are not their intellectual or psychic equals, and of a meaningless indulgence in fertility.

Mary's inheritance of the money with its accompanying power, (which she never uses creatively for her own development) is merely Lewis's dramatic method of emphasizing the fact that financial opportunity is not _the_ simple solution to the problems of women's liberation, if such opportunity is unallied with capacities in the female for growth, autonomy, and self-knowledge. Rather, Lewis seems to indicate that, if women are to become people (rather than operating simply as baby machines),[6] then we must realize that there is a difference between equal opportunity and the opportunity for equality, for women, as for others. The former may be _given to the individual_ (as Mary is given her inheritance), but the latter must be _created by the individual within herself and by herself_, for her own survival in the fullest sense.[7]

One of the interesting themes of the novel is revealed by the comparison between two female characters. Because this comparison recurs in the novel, we may see the novel on _one_ level as a study of two women: Jane Greevey, the aging, unmarried gentlewoman, who lives on the outskirts of upper-class society, and Mary, her more youthful counterpart, whose eventual inheritance makes her a wealthy woman. (Equal attention and time are not given to both of these two characters, within the context of the plot and action of the novel.) Nonetheless, the older woman can be seen as illuminating another of Lewis's themes -- the theme of aging as a human experience,[8] and the peculiar challenge to females which is posed by this phenomenon. At the same time, Jane provides a contrast with Mary, representing, as she seems to, the opposite pole of experience from Mary's. However, by the end of the novel, the reader may well question whether Jane and Mary are indeed so far apart, despite the ostensible differences, of marital status, motherhood and wealth, which divide them. The final endurance of their somewhat marginal friendship,[9] is perhaps a sign of the essential similarity in their basically unfulfilled female singularity, if in nothing else. Through an integration of our understanding of these two female figures, we may see Lewis as presenting further analysis of the position of women in society. That is, through his depiction of these two female figures, Lewis provides an extended overview of the upper-class or upper-middle-class woman[10] in society.

In his depictions of Jane and Mary, Lewis provides some obvious contrasts: Jane represents the aging, unmarried and "unmarriageable" gentlewoman, while Mary represents the still young, beautiful single woman, who is considered a desirable "catch" on the marriage market. (Unfortunately, Mary considers herself in this light, as she is very anxious to find a husband,[11] and has an obsessive fear of aging.) Jane, on the other hand, seems to have made a specialty of growing old gracefully -- so much so, Lewis seems to imply, that she has missed out on some of life's challenges.[12] Both are revealed as women in traps. Jane is in the trap of age, loneliness, and sexual deprivation. Mary is in the trap of youth and beauty which must pass, and she is obsessed with the fear of this passing;[13] she is also in the trap of intellectual[14] and sexual frustration.[15] On the one hand, Mary's intelligence and educational training at University demand outlets which her lifestyle as desirable sex-object preclude; on the other hand, her intelligence and snobbish awareness of her class position[16] establish barriers between her burgeoning sexual desires and the satisfaction of these desires.

Through an examination of Lewis's delineation of the personalities and problems of these two women, we can gain a composite picture of some peculiarly female types of frustration and chauvinism. (In this sense, the term "chauvinism" refers to a highly self-obsessed and stereotypical nature in a female's attitudes toward men and relationships with men.) Additionally, through these two portrayals, Lewis projects some of his other themes for exploration in this novel.

Jane

The presence of Jane Greevey in the novel permits Lewis to explore the themes of spinsterhood as a viable, independent life-style, the female response to aging (which Mary dreads), and the realities of psycho-sexual frustration in the middle period of a person's life. These themes are all presented and examined in the social context of middle-class gentility. The given class context seems to be an important elucidation of the complexities of the psycho-social position of women.

Lewis presents Jane as a female figure who has retained her independence and her class position, whatever else she may have lost. She has grown older graciously, as Lewis tells us:

> Her [Jane's] way of growing old was to be washed out more than anything else. Her ash-blonde hair, for instance, was just grey; but it was an ash grey which was very delicate and attractive; and her face, similarly, had hardly changed at all, but lost all its colour, and, peering about beneath the still thick hair, might have been that of a girl. Her eyes were of a pale blue-grey, she chose for her lips a minimum of colour.
>
> So she cultivated the faded appearance, aiming at the aesthetically genteel with great success, as, sadly willowy, she plunged, with a wilful awkwardness, about her cluttered house.[17]

Jane is the embodiment of not-so-young, genteel virginity, but she is also the unconscious victim of her own passive, proper, and solitary lifestyle, as Lewis shows in the following conversation between Jane and her more "liberated" friend Matilda. In this conversation, Lewis makes clear Jane's sexual naïveté and ambivalence, which, the reader may feel persuaded, must be produced by her undebatable psycho-sexual deprivation. Jane and Matilda are discussing Jane's pompous and aggressive neighbour, Hughie, who rents Jane's garage, and is also one of Mary's few sources of intellectual stimulation. This is so much so that Jane initially assumes that Mary is the aging Hugh's young fiancee. (This naïve assumption is another expression of Jane's sexual inexperience and romanticism.) The implications of this discussion touch on the issues of self-assertion for and by females, and also on the problems of aging for both men and women:

> "All right, be sat on if you prefer it," said Matilda.
>
> "It would be quite impossible for Hughie and me to do any sitting on one another. All he does is a little tiresome protection. He is my officious guardian. But, if he holds an umbrella over his landlady, is not that rather Chinese? Matilda darling, I am not a man-manager."
>
> "More fool you," said her guest.

"What on earth do you mean?" Jane demanded.

"Were you not aware that I am a man-manager?" Matilda looked severe.

Jane shook her head, looking up reproachfully at Matilda. She looked at this managerial type, *a little like a frightened animal*.

Matilda glared up at her pale friend -- so great a contrast to that grey and drooping figure, she with her dark red cheeks and her dyed black hair, and her black eyes.

As Jane grew more and more alarmed, she showed signs of resistance.

"Tilda, I am very angry with myself for allowing you to think that I am criticizing Hughie by my silly protest. He and I have great fun together. *But to be an old woman is a perfectly bloody thing to be*." *Jane laughed with a streak of hysteria. "When a woman has passed a certain age (mine and perhaps yours) she should be obliged to wear a uniform with trousers, so that there should be no misunderstanding*."

Matilda had listened with a sort of glare, tight-lipped and accumlating something destined to explode.

"A uniform! This is not *you* speaking, Jane!" she protested. "I should like to wring that fellow's neck! A uniform! I should like to force Mr. Hughie to wear an *Old Boys*' uniform. . . ."

Jane Greevey rose hurriedly and crossed the room to close her window.

It is evident that you are absolutedly *cowed*," cried Tilda. "He should be invited to listen to every word of what I have to say . . . ."18 (The italics are mine.)

Sexual ambivalence and simplemindedness are similarly results of Jane's sexual repression and psycho-sexual deprivation. This sexual confusion is expressed in Jane's contemptuous and outraged response to Matilda's frankness on the topic of sex:

> "As for myself, for instance, I like pulling a man down on top of me. A confession!" (What a beatly woman, said Jane to herself. I must see much less of Tilda. Because, in Jane's romantic sexology, the man impended apologetically. The only thing about the man that the woman might 'pull down' was, in moments of extreme boldness, his darling head.)
>
> As bold as brass, Matilda did not hesitate to throw herself about a little before her nauseated friend. Then she uttered, in a richly clamant voice, "But I regard myself as a bit of an exception. And men, I believe, may be classified in rather the same proportions. You think this is all rather disgusting? I know, but it is most necessary not to be squeamish. To which classification does the young lady [Mary, whom Jane has assumed is engaged to Hughie] belong? After the honeymoon, will your Hughie be very sexually attentive? Of course not. I doubt if he would even give the poor girl a proper honeymoon. They are, I suppose, at present chaste?"

> This was a side of Matilda which Jane had never surmised. She rose rather abruptly, glided across the room to where some hyacinths had been placed in a large vase. She gave them a new position, pulling one or two of them up with her long delicate fingers, as if to enable them to get a little air, which they must surely need in the proximity of this woman, who, it suddenly seemed, would devour more oxygen than would the normal person of her sex, and she put her face nearer to them to smell them.
>
> Matilda had watched this with a smile. It was plain that she regarded Jane's flowers as symbolic. She evidently thought that Jane experienced the desire for a pure contact -- how illustrative the approaching of her cheek to this congested-looking blossom.[19]

Jane's disgusted reaction to Matilda's frankness reveals her own fear of sexuality, as well as her sexual naïveté. This naïveté is further revealed in her expression of this disgust. In this regard, Jane makes a stereotypical association of the admission of sexuality, and sexual frankness, with maleness, by definition, as seen in the following quotation:

> "You think like a man, it seems to me, Tilda."
>
> Matilda smiled indulgently. "Once I nearly got married -- have I told you that, Jane? I had a fiance. But before the marriage my young man persuaded me to rehearse the honeymoon. I did not think much of his performance. I did not go on with the marriage."
>
> "I am glad of that," said Jane. She rose, and said, "I don't know about you -- but I am getting hungry. Shall we go into the dining room, as I call it?"[20]

In short, Lewis makes clear that for Jane, the definition of femininity excludes admission, awareness, or expression of sexuality. This limited definition of femininity, and thereby, masculinity, is, obviously, a product of Jane's emotional life-style. It seems also the expression of a peculiarly female brand of chauvinism.

Jane Greevey is the respectable inhabitant of Marten's Mews, a polite, semi-elite neighbourhood, which is gradually being invaded by a rat-pack of pugnacious working-class urchins.[21] Lewis places Jane firmly in a social context of subdued respectability, under attack by the socio-economic changes and pressures represented by the urchins. She is an aging spinstress, undoubtedly of modest, but independent, means:

> Marten's Mews, where Jane Greevey had her house, was a product of the war -- although the little dwelling in which she lived had been converted considerably earlier. There were a number of chauffeurs, but these had nothing to do with the street behind which the Mews lay. There were an equal number of residents, pure and simple, half of them aristocratic refugees, as it were, from neighbouring streets. A millionaire, Sir Philip Mortlake, whose house in Ebury Square the government had possessed itself of during the war, was a conspicuous resident. Jane Greevey had, for six or seven years, lived there with an inconspicuousness which did her credit.[22]

Jane rents her garage to the pompous Mr. Hugh Bestens-Corbett (whom she calls "Hughie"), and who treats her lavishly to his many conservative and complacent opinions, while extending a somewhat proprietorial and paternalistic gallantry toward her. Hugh is also friendly with Mary Chillingham, to whom he represents a source of some platonic intellectual interaction. The romanticism which results from her lack of sexual experience, and her psycho-sexual deprivation, causes Jane initially to assume that Mary is Hughie's fiancee -- as ridiculous as this thought might have seemed to the unknowing Mary. Similarly, Lewis proves Jane's psycho-sexual starvation in terms of her painful vulnerability to such colourful attractions as the Reverend Card, who assumes the role of a flamboyant fantasy-figure in Jane's imagination. Lewis demonstrates this fact in describing Jane's response to Father Card's attempts to gain the confidence of the congregation after an early confrontation with one of the more elite members of the parish:

> Jane saw that this attractive man was staking everything upon the dynamism of his personality. He was saying to this considerable collection of persons 'I am engaging in this enterprise to re-create your faith; if my personality inspires you to believe, let us worship together here.' *Or so Jane saw it*. *It was that kind of offer, with whatever words he found to clothe its nakedness, that she, Jane Greevey, was abjectly willing to conform to*. *She would follow this teacher wherever he wished*.[23] (The italics are mine.)

Clearly, Jane's psycho-sexual starvation makes her an easy mark for the highly emotional appeals and manipulations of the egotistical Card. Her emotional identification with the romantic figure of the embattled clergyman obviously forms a treasured part of her fantasy-life, termed by Lewis "this interior life, which kept her mind in a perpetual tumult."[24] Indeed, Jane is becoming quite infatuated with Father Card, of whom she privately thinks as "dear, dear Augustine,"[25] and to whom Lewis ironically refers as "The hero she had tremblingly come to watch,"[26] in the church service. This growing infatuation causes Jane to behave indiscreetly during the service, when she approaches Mary, (still a stranger to her), overwhelmed by curiousity to discover what is in the envelope handed to Mary by Card *via* one of the sidemen. This incident reveals not only the extent to which Jane's emotional starvation and resulting romantic fantasy-life are now controlling her actions, but also reveals Mary's capacity for delicacy and empathy. As such, the incident provides an example of Lewis's skilful integration of the portraits of these two women, and of our accompanying response to them. Lewis tells us:

> Oh -- yes, she saw, indeed she did -- as he was speaking she saw the eye of the preacher fastened upon -- fastened upon -- *what*? Her eye flew with his eye, in sympathy. And where did it alight? Oh! She was watching Mary Chillingham opening her envelope, and drawing out from it what looked like a card of some sort. Her

> eyes were not good enough -- she was too far away. She rose, almost without knowing what she was doing. She slid along the pew, she reached the end and turned, she took a step or two, and, tall as she was, she had almost to double up to do it. Her face was thrust down quite near to Mary's and her eyes were riveted upon the card. (The sermon continued, but Jane was conscious of his eyes fixed upon her.)
>
> There was a start of surprise.
>
> "You are looking at my card? It is an invitation to a Party at the Vicarage. Have you got one?"
>
> Jane blushed so deep a crimson that Mary smiled up at her.
>
> "No. No, Miss Chillingham. I have no card," she whispered back.
>
> "Well, if they do not give you one, come with me . . . will you? Shall I come and pick you up," Mary asked her in a voice as low as her own. "I know where you live. Hugh Bestens-Corbett rents your garage, doesn't he? I've seen you in the Mews. Very well, this says Sunday the twentieth. Eight o'clock. That is next Sunday. . . . Shall I come and fetch you at eight o'clock? We can get there in a few minutes. Settled? Fine or rain. I am sorry to say I don't know your . . ."
>
> "My name? Jane Greevey," she whispered, so low that Mary could not hear it. Noticing her new friend's bewilderment, she said in a louder voice, "Jane -- Jane you know, like Jane Eyre."
>
> "Yes, yes. I've got it. Jane."
>
> "Greevey . . . an ugly name, think of gravy."
>
> Mary smiled up at her. "I like gravy." They both smiled and nodded, and Jane glided back to her pew, her ears burning -- so terribly red -- she was sure they must be one of the reddest things in the world, and a tell-tale beacon, assailing the eye of the Preacher.
>
> As she sank down beside Matilda, she smiled guiltily, and whispered, "I had to see what was in that envelope! Excuse me, Tilda, for my bad behaviour in your church."[27]

Mary deals graciously and sensitively with Jane's indiscretion. Through narration of this incident, Lewis emphasizes the older woman's extreme romanticism and resulting vulnerability and impulsiveness, balanced as this is by the younger woman's sensitive and understanding response. Lewis further clarifies that Jane's emotional starvation and sexual deprivation make her fall prey to a variety of confusing emotional responses (including jealousy of Mary), which cloud her perception of reality, while aggravating her own self-rejection and vulnerability:

> It was His blessed voice.
>
> She fell into a reverie. She thought of a great many things, with singing and praying interwoven with the thoughts, but never interrupting them. She knew now that she should never have come to this church. When Mary Chillingham came next Sunday to fetch her she would not find her there. No. She would not be made any more of a fool of. She began to develop a very great aversion for this disgustingly beautiful girl. It was only for a year or two, it was nothing to be proud of, it was just a stupid condition common to all women for a short time. No one but a cad woman, a fool woman, took advantage of it. She knew it was only loaned her by nature as a dress for a moment to trick some man. She, Jane, did not mind the deceit . . . so long as it was not used to deceive her.
>
> She went on and on thinking in this way belittling this loathsomely beautiful girl, trying to extract herself from the web she had become entangled in, wishing that Matilda was somewhere else.[28]

This romantic and vulnerable gentlewoman has two harsh disappointments in store, as regards her infatuation with the Red Priest (as Lewis ironically labels Card). First, at the party at the Vicarage (which Jane eventually does attend with Mary), Card indicates his attraction to, or interest in, Mary, making clear his insensitivity to, or ignorance of, Jane's presence. Lewis tells us that "Jane departed in a mood quite unlike that in which she had originally approached Mary Chillingham."[29] Jane's second disappointment arrives with the news that Mary and Card are to be engaged. Mary comes to visit with this announcement, unaware of Jane's romantic identification with, and attraction to, her new fiance:

> Mary passed into Jane's living-room; she glanced around, and said "Nothing changed! How comfortable your room is! I shall be a sort of neighbour of yours. I am marrying Father Card."
>
> This information appeared to be a shock for Miss Greevey. Mary perceived that Jane was attached to Augustine, and was sorry that she had given her this piece of news quite so quickly.
>
> "Marrying so spectacular a man as Augustine Card is rather venturesome, don't you think?" Jane sat down.
>
> "Is it all right if I sit down?"[30]

Both women then become involved in the discussion of whether the priest is indeed as "red"[31] as he seems. Of the termination of the visit, and Mary's subsequent departure, Lewis tells us:

> Mary thanked her hostess. A little surprised that no drink had been forthcoming, before long she took her departure. As soon as she had left, Jane mixed herself a cocktail, feeling really the need of a little stimulant. It was a stiff one, for she had, so to speak, all the stuffing knocked out of her by Mary's news.[32]

Again, Jane's tumultuous emotions have taken precedence over etiquette and social training -- lapses which are quite unusual in a person of Jane's class background and rigid orthodoxy.

In his depiction of these incidents, as in the total portrait of Jane, Lewis indicates that psycho-sexual deprivation can over-ride psycho-social conditioning to make even the most genteelly restrained "lady" a victim of her own ravaging emotions and needs. As such, the delineation of Jane is archetypically a portrait of a woman in the trap of loneliness.

Mary

Lewis presents the portrait of Mary as being complementary to, yet contrasting with, the delineation of Jane. In a sense, the specifically female problems which these women face -- making them both victims of their sex, entrapped precisely as a result of their being female -- make them both sisters-under-the-skin. This possibility is implied by Lewis through the complementary nature of both the portraits of Jane and Mary. Through the portrait of Mary, Lewis further projects some of the important themes of the book. These themes include an exploration of the interaction of men, women, and money in marriage; the relative importance of financial power in human relationships; the nature of the combined challenges of beauty and intelligence for women; the conflict for women between aspiration, and the demands of femininity;[33] and, finally, the real nature of equality for women, versus the mere simplification of equal opportunity for women.

Mary is the model of the beautiful, intelligent young woman, who, because of her superior intelligence and intellectual exposure, finds it difficult to meet male sexual partners of her own level of intelligence and sophistication. As Lewis shows in Mary's disconcerting initial contact with Jane, during the church service,[34] Mary is a sensitive, warm, and charmingly well-mannered girl, who is capable of empathizing with others, and of relating to their confusion. However, Lewis describes Mary as "a loveless girl,"[35] obviously because it will be very difficult for this intelligent, educated, and beautiful girl to find a mate who is her equal in every way. (And though Mary could find a man who is intellectually and physically her match, she also demands that her mate should be of suitably high social standing. This snobbery on her part is expressed with regard to her former boyfriend Harry, now a solicitor, to whom she is nonetheless both sexually and intellectually attracted.)[36] Therefore, Mary's sources of frustration are many -- they are intellectual, psycho-sexual, and social, as Lewis indicates in an early description of Mary:

> A very spruce young officer was almost affianced to her [Mary] -- no qualification such as this would be necessary if it were not for her extreme disinclination to admit to it. Mary Chillingham was so accustomed to the society of older people -- her father and his friends, of whom Hugh Bestens-Corbett was one; then her mother, and her sister (who was nearer to forty than she was to thirty) -- that she found it difficult to take Arthur Wootton seriously. He was a child-like Grenadier, as dumb as his busbies.
>
> Mary was fond of dancing, but she wanted to go to what Arthur called 'highbrow' plays, and read books which to him seemed mad, or written for people so clever that they dwelt in some arcanum, situated perhaps on the farther side of Hampstead Heath. His parents were 'rather nice' people, his family was county, he would have a little money -- she was constantly told at home that, if she let Arthur slip, she might never get another chance. So she supposed she was engaged; she found it very difficult to resist the imputation that she was affianced; but the lowness of Arthur's I.Q. caused her to shrink from admitting it. As for such time as she passed with him, she behaved as if she had been asked to look after a child of six, and conversed accordingly. Her real companions were still the elderly; that dear old thing, Hugh Bestens-Corbett, was a useful escort for the highbrow film, or the Picture Gallery and so forth.
>
> There were young men, too, who went around with her, with whom she could discuss the latest book by Charles Morgan, the latest Ealing Studies films, or music by Michael Tippett. But she was a loveless girl, except for Arthur's unclassifiable kisses.[37]

Mary is no doubt attracted to older people for the wealth of experience (with the accompanying wisdom of the years), and intellectual rapport which they can offer her. Interestingly, her father and other such older male figures, provide her closest and most pleasant contacts with men.[38] Through this projection of Mary's intellectual frustration, allied as this is with psycho-sexual frustration, Lewis is indicating the problems for women of being both intelligent and beautiful, and of dealing with the demands of their intellect and of their femininity in satisfying and integrated ways. Mary's problems in this regard are further exacerbated by her privileged social position, and her own snobbish values concerning social prestige. Thus, Lewis defines Mary as being typically the privileged upper-middle-class or elitist woman. Lewis makes it clear, in his description of her attitude toward her former lover, Harry, that her own class values are an added barrier to the possibility of her finding a compatible mate, and therefore are an added source of frustration. In a fit of boredom, Mary goes up to Norwich to visit Harry, now a country solicitor, and still unmarried. Her own sexual ennui is no doubt at the back of this visit; but Mary is unable to admit the reality of her sexual needs, even to herself.[39] Therefore, when Harry makes the inevitable sexual pass at her, Mary's reaction is both ambivalent, in terms of her fear of her own sexual response to him, and snobbishly crude. Of this incident, Lewis tells us:

> She went through this door a little timorously, and was not surprised when, the other side of it, he seized her, and dragged her down upon a bed.
>
> "No! Look here, you must behave -- none of that!"
>
> She slipped out of his grip roughly, and sprang away, very red. She walked quickly back into the first room. Smiling sheepishly, Harry strolled after her. "You are probably right," he said. "My apologies."
>
> He lit a cigarette, and sat down. Mary sat down too, took one of the cigarettes he offered, and lit it.
>
> "I am a lawyer. What did you come down to Norwich for?" he asked.
>
> "Do you want to know?" She asked this aggressively.
>
> "Yes," said Harry.
>
> "I came down here to have a look at you, Harry. I always had dismissed you as palpably unsuitable, but I thought I would have another look, and see quite how hopeless you were, or not so bad, perhaps -- we were quite fond of one another, and if I had been mistaken, about *your social incompatibility* . . ."
>
> *Harry Ritchie's face had grown red, and he looked angry*.[40] (The italics are mine.)

Lewis clearly portrays Mary as unable to integrate her intellectual life, her social aspirations and prejudices, and her psycho-sexual needs with the traditional role of the upper-middle-class or bourgeois female. Thus, Lewis shows the conflict for women such as Mary, between the demands of the intellect, of social status, and of their psycho-sexuality. In exploring the problems of such women, Lewis shows Mary as having difficulty in being both a female and a person.

Lewis reveals that Mary's response to these pressures results in obsessive fear of aging (a not uncommon paradox in a woman so beautiful) and a corrosive anxiety to find a husband. Clearly, these anxieties are based in a self-negating definition of her humanity in the simplistic terms of her body as marketable property, and of marriage as the pinnacle of female success and acceptance. (Certainly, if one considers one's body as one's only positive asset, then one will be in great fear of its inevitable aging.) However, in a woman of Mary's ostensible intelligence, and academic background, it seems clear that this obsessive fear and anxiety indicate a high level of self rejection. Of course, some feminists[41] will counter that such obsessions are merely the natural product of the male-dominated process which passes for education for women at various academic levels, and in various disciplines. However we define them, Mary's fear of aging and her obsession with the need to find a husband are disturbing.

Lewis shows that Mary's obsessions are related to the questionable value of education for women when this is received in the context of the intellectual void which is created by their entrenchment in limited traditional female roles.[42] This point is raised by Lewis's reporting of Mary's conversation with her mother, against whom she feels some hostility, and who is the most powerful person in the family structure.

> Mary sat with her mother in her modest 'den,' in the early evening of the day of the luncheon party.
>
> "You are a problem child, Mary," her mother said.
>
> "Of twenty-seven?" was Mary's reply.
>
> "That is the age of my problem," the mother said.
>
> "Rubbish. How can I be a problem?" Mary asked firmly.
>
> Dressed for Lord's (by Jacqmar) she stretched out her beautiful legs, nyloned as France dictates, a mass of youthful perfections. Gazed upon by Mrs. Chillingham, that lady cogitated grimly: "As if such a terribly marriageable woman were not a problem to a mother, with all that on her mind!"
>
> "You have no right to have a problem," Mary told her. "You are quite right when you say that you ought never to have sent me to Newnham; it was an idiotic thing to do. I am inclined to think that you wanted to make a school marm of me -- a drudge, of an inferior class. Then, since I have left there, I have lived with you and Father and an older sister -- always with people much older than myself. The result of my education, and of my association, presents me with a problem -- not you. Arthur is about my age; but, in my eyes, he is an irritating child. Marriage with him would be awful. My husband should be quite different in education, in intelligence, and fifteen years older. I go to Lord's with Arthur as I should with a young brother (say fourteen), and as to the books we discuss, the theatres he talks about! He quotes me what he has read in the newspapers, and really believes that these judgements are his own. Usually they are idiotic. Yet I have to get married, and, a few years hence, that will be much more difficult. That is my problem . . . . You are partly responsible for it. But do not lay claim to my problem. If you feel guilty about it, it is too late."[43]

At twenty-seven, Mary's intellectual and psycho-sexual frustration (along with her annoying lack of financial independence),[44] have forced her into an obsessive view of herself as a body to be sold as a product on the marriage market. This demeaning and self-negating view of herself and of marriage is further revealed in conversation with her mother:

> "You wash your hands of your problem, and have nothing to say about mine," Mary protested. "It is your fault if I outlined my problem. What are you prepared to do about it? Let me suggest something. I know that money is short; but, if I could have a change of scene, I could escape gracefully from Arthur; then I could set my cap at any man who eyed my nylons with interest, who was educated, and who might be able to keep me. The scene is the problem -- Rome, Paris, Monte Carlo? How long will you keep me hunting for a suitable man?"

> "I am afraid that the exchequer would not run to that. That is the trouble." Her mother frowned. "Please believe me, Mary."
>
> "*I am getting dangerously old, I know. Twenty-seven*." Mary jumped up and took up an envelope. She drew out a photograph and handed it to her mother. "My latest photograph. I have a good deal of colour in my face, but without that bloom, I look about . . . . six years older . . . . Don't I? -- I doubt if people who had never seen me would believe that I was only twenty-seven. That is your responsibility again. Newnham took its toll of years."
>
> Her mother was becoming extremely irritable. As a child Mary used to indulge in arguments of this kind. For hours she would go on building up a quite consecutively logical, but quite nonsensical grievance. Mary might soon, she felt, accuse her of being responsible for some slight rheumatic affliction, which she once said prevented her from climbing on to a bus. Fundamentally it was a childish retaliation for her mother's good advice. This blooming girl who possessed that kind of wonderful youthfulness which stops when the twenties end was now trying to convince herself that she had already lost those miraculous good looks -- because she had been given *an academic training for one thing; and then had not been afforded the conditions to satisfy the needs produced by the training*.[45]
> (The italics are mine.)

By implication in this passage, Lewis reveals the full, and shocking, extent of Mary's senseless paranoia about aging and about marriage. These implications are reinforced by a similar conversation which Mary has with her newly found, older friend, (really a friend of her older sister, Alice) and whom Lewis punningly entitles "The Ghastly Girl." (This was the title given to graduates of her former College, Casterleigh, popularly known as "Ghastly.")[46] In describing this conversation, Lewis also touches upon other key issues, such as financial and intellectual independence for women, the relationship of beauty and sexuality, as well as the challenges involved in the aging process, and thereby, the limitations of purely physical beauty as an asset in coping with life. Monica is an old school friend of Alice, Mary's older, widowed sister. Monica represents the Lewisian model of the aging, unmarried, intellectual female, and is of the same type represented by Jane Greevey's sexually expressive friend, Matilda,[47] and Agnes Irons, Margot's assertive friend in the novel The Revenge for Love.[48] These three female characters, who play the role of friend or confidante to major Lewisian female figures, represent varying stages of assertiveness, sexual consciousness, and "femininity."[49] They are Lewis's symbolic representations of the traditionally "unfeminine" qualities of assertiveness, independence, shrewdness and autonomy. As such, they provide the other side of the conventional image of femininity and of womanhood which is largely represented by Lewisian female figures. Apparently, Lewis uses these unorthodox figures as a foil for, and a challenge to, the female values and emotional lifestyles embodied in such traditional female figures as Jane and Mary, Margot (The Revenge for Love), Hester (Self-Condemned), and April and Maddie (The Vulgar Streak). Therefore, from a feminist standpoint, Lewis's introduction of Monica as Mary's sounding-board for her paranoid complaints may seem to be ideologically symbolic, for, in this conversation, Mary is expressing anxieties and fears which, within a feminist perspective, would be non-existent.

Fittingly, and perhaps ironically, Monica's and Mary's conversation begins with a reference to Virginia Woolf:

> But as her sister had gone out to dinner and bridge, as usual, Mary thought she could do worse than spend the rest of the evening with Monica, so she invited this odd friend of Alice's up to her den. Mary mixed a cocktail for her visitor, and took one herself.
>
> "You are comfortable here, Mary," Monica said, looking round.
>
> "It's poky, but I am free here," Mary answered. "'A room of one's own' is a great thing, as Virginia Wolfe [sic] said."
>
> "I do so agree with Virginia Wolfe," Monica replied. "There is a philosophy for women, isn't there? The 'room of one's own' is a female dogma."
>
> "That is not a dogma very popular in this house," Mary said.
>
> "No?" The Ghastly Girl seemed to squint.

"Not really," Mary told her. "My sister has a special position here. She has her own money, left her by Douglas. So she is given a corner of the house all to herself. She automatically gets rooms of her own. I am different. I am the poor brat of the family. Hence this attic."

Monica raised her eyebrows quizzically, and seemed to be pinching in her nostrils. She was apparently digesting Mary's rather powerful cocktail. "Hardly that of a brat" was what she thought.[50]

Lewis indicates through this conversation, Mary's hostility to her mother as the decision-maker and the controlling figure in the family,[51] as well as her view of money as a solution to the problems of independence and autonomy for a young woman. (Indeed, Mary continually makes an equation between financial independence and total independence, seeing money and the possession of it as an unquestionable solution to emotional or psychological needs -- as is proven in her very open rejection of her mother after she has obtained her inheritance.)[52] It is clear, however, that, despite her reference to Virginia Woolf's philosophy of female autonomy and independent creativity, Mary is incapable of a psychic internalization of the lessons of Woolf's philosophy. In short, Lewis is here hinting at the fact that Mary's intellectual exposure and intellectual development are not accompanied by an equal degree of emotional development and maturity. From this fact follows the paradox that Mary's acquisition of financial independence makes her emotionally or psychologically no better off than her less solvent sisters, as the money cannot liberate her from the trap of her own lack of psychic freedom, manifest in her narcissistic obsession with beauty and aging, and her compulsive need to find a "suitable" husband. Mary's bewilderment concerning her own obsessive feelings about aging is expressed in the conversation with Monica:

> "I know that you are considerably older than I am. I wonder if I might ask you . . . oh, it is rather a curious question. I am twenty-seven, which is not old, I know. At my age, did you feel yourself rapidly aging? It is very morbid, isn't it?"
>
> A Ghastly Girl, Monica realised, must be expected to have rather curious sensations. Without speaking, she surveyed the astonishingly beautiful young woman, crouched there before her. To possess all that desirableness like that might result, she reflected, in a dread of its leaving her. A young woman might develop a terrible fear: she might come to feel that time was slipping away unnaturally quickly.
>
> "No, Mary," said Monica. "No sensations of that kind ever visited me. But then I never possessed such a wealth of beauty as you. If I had I can well imagine myself dreading the time coming when I should no longer have it. That sensation might develop into a morbid state of mind. I think you must blame your extraordinary good looks. You are unusually beautiful, if you do not object to my pointing that out. Such things only last for a very short time. This puts a woman in a very special position. It is like the possession of one of those wonderful voices, like Kathleen Ferrier's. I always pity a very beautiful woman, much more than I grieve for the opposite of that. A hag has no farther to drop, while, with beauty, one is conscious of the abyss."[53]

In this passage, Lewis indicates that Mary lacks a strong sense of herself as a person, rather than as a beautiful sex object, on sale to a suitable suitor, for the price of a wedding band. Because of this, she is no more able to cope with the problems posed by her acquisition of wealth, and the psychological implications of this,[54] than she is able to cope with the challenges of aging, of female independence, of sexual freedom, and of psychological autonomy. Lewis's demonstration of these facts is related to his delineation of Mary's attitudes toward money, sexuality, and sex, respectively.

Mothers, Daughters and Chauvinists

Alice, Mary's older sister, is a widow. In reporting a conversation between Mary and Alice (after Mary has received her inheritance), Lewis explores some female attitudes towards sex and sexuality. Here, Lewis reveals Mary's sexual immaturity and conservatism, as well as (later in the conversation) Alice's crassly demeaning attitude towards men as sources of babies, or as studs. Given Mary's sexual immaturity and naïveté, it is not surprising to the reader that Card succeeds in seducing her as he so soon does. (Of course, Card realizing Mary's intelligence and intellectual boredom, very wisely seduces her mind before he approaches her body.)[55] Lewis infers that there is a connection in Mary's mind between sex and money, and money and marriage. These associations of thought are clearly at the base of her inability to cope with the sexual challenge posed by her romance with Card, and are also innate in the larger context of her own reality as a sexual creature. Lewis utilizes the conversation between Mary and Alice as a means of pinpointing many of these factors. Their talk starts on the topic of money, and explores other areas:

> "But you have twice as much as I have, you lucky girl!" Mary said. "When one has as much money as you have one does not think about it, I expect."
>
> "I wish that Douglas had lived," Alice confided, "and that we had had children. That would have been worth a great deal of money."
>
> "Yes, you had very bad luck," Mary reflected; "and Douglas was such a fine fellow, wasn't he! I remember being deeply impressed by his kilts. Marriage is a very big subject with me -- very urgent. You know that Mother was always trying to make me marry that child, Arthur Wootton. I have not a young enough mind to marry just anybody. But I am probably too old to marry. You got all that done when you were nineteen. And I do not feel that my legacy is going to help in any way."
>
> "Oh, I don't know. It might make a great difference," her sister answered. "You will be able now to move around a bit more. A nice intelligent Frenchman might meet your requirements, Mary."
>
> "Perhaps my money dispenses with the necessity of a husband," was Mary's next thought on the marriage state. "Why should one have another being who would perhaps complicate one's life so much? . . ."[56]

Not surprisingly, perhaps, as Lewis reveals here, Mary's obsessive desire to get married has been unaccompanied by any clear understanding of marriage as part of a larger relationship between a woman and a man. Thus, Lewis shows that her view of marriage is quite fragmented, based on internal obsessions and false criteria of social acceptability for women, rather than on a recognition of marriage as a social institution connected with the demands of sexuality and love. Hence, her sister's reply is very fitting, and is Lewis's way of further emphasizing Mary's undeveloped sexual awareness and her superficial view of marriage:

> "I think you look upon marriage from a very individual standpoint. You do not seem to allow for sex. Marriage, for you, has little to do with sex." Alice was quite spirited.
>
> Mary did not answer. Then in a minute or two, she said. "Sex involves so much indecency. Call it marriage, and it is all right."
>
> "What a puritanic statement," said Alice.
>
> "Well, I feel puritan just at present. However, whether I approach a double life from the point of view of sex, or of marriage, it is time that it happened, and I am most alarmed at not seeing any husband in sight. I am so constituted that sex would fly out of the window if a man said something too stupid. Can you suggest anything?"
>
> "The most sexual thing that there is," said Alice, "is having a child. The steps you take in order to achieve that are physically extremely pleasant. But so is eating an ice-cream. *So you must think of sex as the production of a child -- the ice-cream is not important enough to rivet your attention*. So, in your present state, eliminate everything from your mind except having a child. *Therefore, think of nothing but a fine physique, well-shaped feet, a straight nose, et cetera. Then you know what to look for -- speed up the finding of a man*." 57 (The italics are mine.)

Thus, Lewis shows that Mary's sexual puritanism and immaturity are only equalled by her sister's chauvinism and atavism in this regard! At least, however, Alice does not see money as a suitable replacement for her dead husband -- quite unlike Mary, who seems to think that her new acquisition of money may obviate the "necessity" of her husband-hunt, seeming to infer that money is, in her mind, a replacement for a loving relationship with a man (which is what marriage should suggest).

It is useful to wonder whether Mary's paranoia with regard to money, aging and marriage, is entirely unrelated to the fact that there is so little mature empathy between herself and her mother. Instead of a warm, mutually supportive mother-daughter relationship, Lewis depicts these two women as being highly resentful of, and hostile to, each other. However we may choose to explain this relationship of conflict, it seems logical to assume that Lewis is projecting this negative relationship as being in some vague way connected to Mary's desire to be married, and her even greater need for financial independence. Indeed, Lewis allows Mary herself to elucidate the function which this non-relationship has had in terms of her own emotional insecurity, in the bitter scene which takes place between Mary and her mother after Mary has gained her inheritance from her maternal Aunt Blanche. Here, Lewis explores the nature of the hostility between these two women. He also examines the fact that Mary mistakenly believes that money is an adequate substitute for more valid solutions to the emotional problem posed by such difficult relationships, or that money can liberate her from the complicated human emotions which are at the base of such painful relationships. Similarly, the mother's resentment and hostility toward her daughter are made clear, as is the way in which this woman has, in the past, used money as a lever in the struggle with her daughter:

> "Has your lately inherited wealth affected you in any way," asked Mrs. Chillingham.
>
> "No, except, as I explained, I had to remain silent before that acquisition of wealth, or rather I avoided disagreeable subjects . . ."
>
> "Oh, oh, oh," called Mrs. Chillingham.
>
> "You forget that if I wanted a tooth brush, or if my shoes hurt, or if I wanted to contribute some small sum to the church, I had to ask you. My allowance was inadequate in such cases. Perhaps I had spent it on a cinema."
>
> "It amuses you to exaggerate," said her mother. "Looking back, you can pretend that you lived in a sort of Dotheboys Hall. I don't care, if it gives you any pleasure."
>
> "What I suggest is that you mention the clothes that I have been provided with by expensive dressmakers. But those were merely liveries which I had to wear, as otherwise I should have disgraced your doorstep, where I was incessantly entering and leaving. My hats were like the cockaded hats formerly worn by grooms. And, in general, my apparel was necessitated by my relationship to you. Need I go farther?" Mary asked, looking around the table. "I lived extremely well, for I shared your food."[58]

With regard to this conversation, Lewis makes clear the fact that Mary's father, General Chillingham, is caught in the crossfire between these two women, and that, while he empathizes with Mary, he is unable to influence his wife's anger against this beautiful daughter. (Of course, Freudian analysis of the family is not irrelevant here.)[59] Nonetheless, whatever the true bases for this conflict (which indeed seems highly competitive) between mother and daughter, Lewis makes it plain that the hostility of the mother toward the daughter is not merely a figment of Mary's imagination, as in the following passage:

> As to her [Mary's] own inheritance, there had been a most fortunate clause in the will enjoining that the money marked down for her was to have priority over all other legacies, and to be handed over at the earliest possible moment. This immediate transference of the monies which she inherited was a provision which greatly annoyed everyone except Mary. Approximately fifty thousand pounds was the sum involved -- partly in cash, and partly in investments outside Kenya. The radical change produced by the possession of this money in Mary's position in the family circle, to start with, reacted with such expedition as to open her eyes as to what her condition had been before, and as to what it would be henceforth. It gave her, with a flash of a wand, as it were, an independence of the most palpable kind. She had

> *been, up to that time, in her mother's hands*. It was to her, and not her father, that she was compelled to turn if she wanted anything from a sixpenny piece upwards. It was from her father that the family wealth derived, not from her mother. But the handling of it was left, in great part, to that lady. Mary could not go over her mother's head, and appeal to the General. *She had learned greatly to resent these maternal powers; and her mother had not troubled to conceal the fact that Mary was not her favourite daughter, and was, for whatever reason, discriminated against*.
>
> *Mary had, from the start, been given a very inconsiderable allowance, and had, as a consequence of this, felt deeply aggrieved*. She therefore felt herself, upon hearing of her Aunt Blanche's legacy, as saved from her mother's oppression. She now realized that her willingness for her to go to Cambridge had been because that would get her out of the way for the years involved. She experienced, at the same time, a powerful movement of gratitude towards the dead woman. She had always had a friend in Aunt Blanche, had travelled with her in Italy as a schoolgirl, and gone with her to Scandinavia four years before. *On this last occasion the older woman had realised how little help Mary had received from her mother in the way of money, and how little sympathy her sister felt for this extremely attractive young woman*. She began to make her niece occasional presents, and kept in touch with her, showing a sustained interest.[60] (The italics are mine.)

In terms of the further action of the novel.[61] and of the foregoing assertions by Lewis, as well as Mrs. Chillingham's resentment of her daughter's inheritance,[62] and her refusal to countenance the wedding to Card,[63] an important question emerges concerning the relationship of conflict between Mary and her mother. This question concerns the possibility that Lewis is implying that Mary's need for maternal acceptance from this unloving woman is part of her motivation in so urgently seeking a mate, and the accompanying acceptance symbolized for a woman in marriage.

We have already stated that Lewis shows Mary as the image of the woman who is unable to combine the demands of her intellect, her class bias, and of her psycho-sexuality, and who therefore is unable to cope with the full implications of sexual freedom. These factors, combined with her narcissism, her obsession with aging, her unresolved relationship with her mother, and her inadequate understanding of freedom, money and sexuality, all propel her into her hectic search to find a marriage partner. Lewis indicates clearly to the reader that Mary is a woman in the grips of psycho-sexual frustration -- a frustration which she is psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually, quite unequipped to handle. This fact is revealed in the aftermath of Lewis's description of one of Mary's unpleasant interviews with her mother:

> Mary rose and walked violently about. Her mother never discussed it with her, but she must have known that this radiant scented body required some satisfaction. But sexually to have some foolish fellow 'messing about with her ' -- rather than that she preferred sterility, loneliness, death. Her mother did not apparently know what it meant to be a lovely, intensely desirable creature like herself. She was hopeless.[64]

Mary is both intellectually and sexually frustrated. However, she has yet to learn that neither marriage nor money can provide ready-made solutions for these problems, and that neither marriage nor money can validly be used as a substitute for self-development, and the demands of psychic growth. Therefore, she becomes more and more entrapped by her own sensuality and immaturity, and, therefore, also, increasingly vulnerable to the proposals of the ego-centred Father Card. Thus, when Card suddenly asks Mary to marry him (never suspecting her new acquisition of wealth -- of which he only learns from Mrs. Chillingham, after the marriage),[65] Mary's response is motivated more by her sexual hunger than by any more dependable factor. Of her response to Card's surprisingly sudden proposal of marriage, Lewis tells us:

> It was really rather satisfactory that this brilliant, young -- yes, still he might be called young -- clergyman should wish to marry her, *although, for all he knew, she was not a young woman of fortune, or so very eligible as she had recently become*. She allowed herself to remain in a comfortable hollow of this vast body, hoping that he would not push her along any farther, down the emotional road in which she had so rashly ventured. But she *could not resist the hot instinctive desire that the impending face would come a little nearer*; *and so, when his mouth reached down and seized on hers in a burning embrace, she responded, without any show of hesitation*; with a warm hand she clung to one of his rather alarmingly large shoulders, tiptoeing ever so slightly.[66] (The italics are mine.)

Similarly, Lewis tells us:

> So it was in a new and glowing frame of mind that she made her way home. *Hers was the full-blooded feminine response to the masculine attack. The full experience of her body had been given to Father Card's great offer.*[67] (The italics are mine.)

Lewis's description of Mary's subsequent consideration of Card's offer, as set against the possibility of husband-hunting among elite international social circles elsewhere, is as follows:

> There were, in these unemotional excogitations, two principal factors. The first one that she had passed in review was the economic, which was related entirely to her recent legacy. Under the heading 'sex' may be mentioned something of equal importance. The way she put this to herself was as follows: am I putting my money on the right man? She really knew very little about Father Card in that connection. They had not been properly alone at all. And before a woman could decide to get married to a man she should have passed some period in his company, and so have been able to come to an intimate conclusion as to what degree they were physically compatible with one another.
>
> To put this brutally, what kind of a bedfellow would this boxing Blue turned parson make? It might be a terrible mistake to marry a clergyman. If the physical side of the business was wrong she knew just how intolerable that could be. Making guesses about this was so much less satisfactory than a testing would be. But she could not suggest a night for two in bed with a holy man. She regarded all this as horribly hard-boiled. But how was the question to be avoided? She would have to spy out the situation during two or three months; provide incidents which would disclose certain facts; invite rehearsals of conjugal bliss of one kind or another. At the end of such a trial period she would know better what to think about marriage. She was sure it would be all right with this hot-blooded elephant, but he was, after all, elephantine. She must go elephant-hunting, sexually speaking.

> When she came to the end of a great deal of hard-boiled thinking Mary did a curious thing; she tossed up. She took a shilling out of her purse, and promised herself to toss three times to get rid of Card or to do the opposite. If tails were uppermost more than once, that would be in favour of Father Card. She threw the coin into the air, and down came a head. Up it went into the air again, and down came a tail. She felt she was in danger now. With her heart beating a little she flung it high, and it was again tails that presented itself to her.
>
> As she had chosen this method, it was no use arguing with fate. You had to take it or leave it. It was Card who had won the toss -- simply because she had arranged it that way; that, if the tails came down twice, it was to be Card. She decided that, the next morning, she would go again to the cell or the studio, whichever Augustine preferred.[68]

Here, Lewis ironically shows us a picture of an intelligent woman choosing a most unintelligent way of making a decision which will have enormous implications, in terms of every level of her future. Again, Lewis is demonstrating Mary's emotional immaturity, her inadequate understanding of the full meaning of marriage as a social and emotional undertaking, and finally, her burgeoning sexual needs as strong, but negative, factors in her motivation. By leaving her decision up to chance, rather than basing her choice upon rationality, or an intuitive assessment of her own emotions, Mary inevitably ends up placing undue emphasis on the question of sexual compatibility, rather than on examining Card's relative psychic or moral worth, and their potential for emotional compatibility. Small wonder, then, given this fragmentative approach on her part, that her sexual contact with her new husband produces dissatisfaction. Lewis indicates this fact in his description of their honeymoon:

> The honeymoon was spent in Canon Card's exquisite cottage. As to the amorous showing of Augustine, his exertions nearly made an end of the Canon's antique four-poster. Otherwise, he proved himself no exception to the rule regarding the giant's tendency to laziness. After the excitements of the day, he was soon asleep. On the other hand, as to his fecundity, before the end of their honeymoon Mary discovered that she must expect a child.[69]

Ironically, in view of her emphasis on the strictly pleasurable aspects of sexuality (rather than, as Alice had suggested, equally myopically, on the reproductive aspects), Mary is to become a mother without having truly or fully been a lover. This is perhaps an ironic judgement on Lewis's part of her fragmentary stress on sex and sexual compatibility as one of her main criteria in selecting Card as a husband. Similarly, Lewis adds:

> Mary fancied that Augustine grew bigger and stronger every day. On the whole, she thought that her own love grew daily, *although he took his lover's task in too leisurely a way*.[70] (The italics are mine.)

The final message of the novel is that Mary, the model of the gifted, privileged woman, has submerged her own aspirations and need to achieve, and the urge toward self-development, in a stultifying relationship with a man who is neither her emotional, nor intellectual equal, and also in the labyrinth of fertility. In terms of her own fragmentative approach to sexuality, and her negative motivations in seeking marriage as a substitute for individual growth (all of these being unconscious aspects of her emotional immaturity), it is small wonder that this effort results in inevitable frustration and bitterness. The marriage itself can be seen as a symbol of Mary's own psychic enslavement to the traditional mores of marriage and fertility as rites of female acceptance. The apotheosis of this enslavement is the birth of Zero, who is clearly the child of a finally alienated marriage, and the symbol of a negative alliance. Of the birth of this child, Lewis says:

> Mary and Basil Tertullian withdrew to the plantation on the shores of Lake Rudolf, where she gave birth to another child. *Her naming was more like a branding; she gave him the fearful name of*

> Zero. She could see that he would look like his terrible father; that he was fated to blast his way across space and time.[71] (The italics are mine.)

The birth of this second child, conceived by parents who were psychically, then physically estranged, has important implications, both in terms of the structure of the plot of the novel, and also in terms of the symbolism of the baby's name. Mary, in every sense the mother of Zero, is Lewis's delineation of the woman who participates in her own psychic oppression, despite the possession of the ostensible means to equality and self-development. This portrait, then, is Lewis's definition, *par excellence*, of a person caught in the trap of female chauvinism.

Footnotes

[1] See the comments of the psychiatrist, Mr. Perl, to Vincent, in The Vulgar Streak, 183.

[2] See Lewis's 1931 study entitled Hitler. Compare also R. T. Chapman's comments on the Hitler figure as manifest in Kreisler in the novel Tarr, and in Father Card of The Red Priest. These comments appear in Chapman's Wyndham Lewis: Fictions and Satires, 72-73, and 148-149, respectively.

[3] Lewis, The Red Priest, 298.

[4] Concerning females and their aspirations, or their urge to succeed, compare Phyllis Wallace, Some New Perspectives on Equal Employment Opportunity; E. Davis, "Careers as Concerns of Blue Collar Girls," in Shostak and Gomberg, ed., Blue Collar World: Studies of the American Worker, 154-164; D.C. McClelland, J.W. Atkinson, R.A. Clark, and E.L. Lowell, The Achievement Motive. See also C. Safilios-Rothschild, "Dual Linkages between the Occupational and Family Systems: A Macrosociological Analysis," and Judith Long Laws, "Work Aspirations of Women: False Leads and New Starts," in M. Blaxall and B. Reagan, ed., Women and the Workplace -- The Implications of Occupational Segregation, 51-60 and 33-49, respectively. Cf. also M. Komarovsky, "Cultural Contradictions and Sex Roles," M. Horner, "The Motive to Avoid Success and Changing Aspirations of College Women," and P.J. Weston and M.T. Mednick, "Race, Social Class, and the Motive to Avoid Success in Women," in J.M. Bardwick, ed., Readings on the Psychology of Women, 58-62, 62-68, and 68-72, respectively.

[5] Interestingly, Mary's inheritance was earned by her maternal Aunt's investments in colonial Kenya. In this regard, compare Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, 162-189 and F. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth.

[6] Compare Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 192.

[7] Compare the fate of the once solvent Mme. Peronnette, of Lewis's short story, Beau Séjour, contained in the Lewis collection, The Wild Body, 66-108. Compare also Phyllis Chesler, and Emily Jane Goodman, Women, Money and Power.

[8] See our other comments on this theme in our preceding analysis of The Vulgar Streak. Cf. Gail Sheehay, Passages -- Predictable Crises of Adult Life, and also Lewis, The Red Priest, 20, 55, and 60. Cf. also S. De Beauvoir, The Coming of Age, 131-415.

[9] Lewis, The Red Priest, 298.

[10] Compare our analysis of April (The Vulgar Streak), in Section I, Chapter II, of this thesis.

[11] See The Red Priest, 72.

[12] Ibid., Jane's conversation with Matilda, 20-24.

[13] Ibid., 72, and also 135-136.

[14] See Mary's boredom with, and resentment of, her inane suitor, Arthur: The Red Priest, 63.

[15] Ibid., 73-74. See this frustration as a motive behind her visit to Harry, a former lover, 75-84.

[16] Ibid., 80: despite Mary's attraction to Harry, she rejects him out of class snobbery.

[17] The Red Priest, 12-13.

[18] Ibid., 19-20. Compare Jane's antagonistic and jealous attitude toward the beautiful Mary: The Red Priest, 60.

[19] Ibid., 22-23. Compare Jane's romantic assumptions about the nature of the relationship between Mary and Hughie with Lewis comments about it, The Red Priest, 63.

[20] Ibid., 23-24.

[21] Ibid., 2-4. (Note Jane's empathetic response to the expressions on the faces of the urchins.)

[22] Ibid., 5.

[23] Ibid., 57.

[24] Ibid., 54.

[25] Ibid., 54.

[26] Ibid., 54.

[27] Ibid., 57-58.

[28] Ibid., 60.

[29] Ibid., 91.

[30] Ibid., 196-197.

[31] Ibid., 197.

[32] Ibid., 199.

[33] Cf. Wallace, Davis, McClelland et al., Safilios-Rothschild, Laws, Komarovsky, Horner, Weston and Mednick, Op. Cit.

[34] The Red Priest, 58.

[35] Ibid., 63.

[36] Ibid., 80.

[37] Ibid., 62-63.

[38] Freudian analysts may interpret Card as a "father figure," because of his greater age.

[39] The Red Priest, 75-76.

[40] Ibid., 79-80.

[41] Cf. B. Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, M. Wolstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, and S. De Beauvoir, The Second Sex.

[42] See G. Greer's The Female Eunuch, for an analysis of these roles.

[43] Lewis, The Red Priest, 71-72.

[44] At this point, Mary has not yet inherited the money.

[45] The Red Priest, 72-73.

[46] See The Red Priest, 129-132.

[47] Ibid., 14-24.

[48] See Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 232-245.

[49] Ibid., 232. Compare Agnes's style of dressing.

[50] The Red Priest, 132-133.

[51] Ibid., 170-171.

[52] Ibid., 179-183.

[53] Ibid., 135-136.

[54] Ibid., 209.

[55] The Red Priest, 145-148 and 155.

[56] Ibid., 176-177.

[57] Ibid., 177.

[58] Ibid., 180.

[59] Compare, however, traditional Freudian views of the family (especially the Electra syndrome) with Nancy Friday's analysis of the mother-daughter connection, in My Mother/My Self.

[60] The Red Priest, 170-171.

[61] See Ibid., 203-204, for the meeting between Card and Mary's mother, where the latter spitefully reveals Mary's inheritance, of which Mary had not hitherto informed her new husband.

[62] Ibid., 195.

[63] Cf. Ibid., 195 and 201.

[64] Ibid., 73-74.

[65] Ibid., 203-204.

[66] Ibid., 187-188.

[67] Ibid., 189.

[68] Ibid., 191-192.

[69] Ibid., 201-202.

[70] Ibid., 202. Cf. also 211.

[71] Ibid., 298.

CHAPTER V

SOME ANDROGYNOUS SOLUTIONS TO *THE REVENGE FOR LOVE*

Margot and Victor -- You and Me Against the World

The Revenge for Love[1] is a story less of tragic love than of love in a potentially tragic environment. The novel counterpoints many of Lewis's favourite themes: love versus lust, and the struggle for physical, emotional, and psychic survival, in a social environment which often discourages such growth. Like *The Vulgar Streak*,[2] *The Revenge for Love* tells the story of working-class protagonists -- the lovers Victor and Margot. Victor is a struggling (unemployed and unknown) artist, who attempts to pursue and express his own talents as an artist in the face of all the discouragements that a lack of financial and social security represent. An Australian, he is an outsider in English society; but Lewis shows that he is no more of an unwanted alien than his working-class English lover, Margot. As Lewis defines Victor's character, self-irony makes self-pity impossible for him. In Victor's struggle, Lewis depicts the universal conflict between the pursuit of art and the forces of life, or the demands of living.[3] Though Victor may prove to himself that he can indeed paint, and indeed possesses some artistic talent, he lives in a time and place where talented artists, if poor, unknown, *and* proud or self-respecting, cannot survive simply through art, or the development of innate talents.

As if to imply these points, Lewis portrays Victor, in a despairing mood, as he decides to make one last effort at painting a good picture, the production of which will be a sign to himself that he should continue with his pursuit of art, rather than abandon both it, and life also. Ironically, he ends up by producing something which both others, and he himself,[4] recognize as worthwhile. Consequently, he can justify escaping from neither art, nor life. Lewis shows that desperate irony is Victor's main stimulus, as he paints:

> Normally he would have felt an ungovernable enthusiasm at the sight of such a surprisingly successful upshot to a morning's work. As it was, keeping faith with his idea, submitting to the gambler's fatalism, and an extremely grim, not to say ascetic, satisfaction might have been detected at the very most. He _did_ know a good thing when he saw it -- his training had taught him that much. And this was a good thing. As such things went, this was moderately good. He eyed it sardonically. In a sense he recognized that it was not his. He grinned at it over the rim of his breakfast cup. He was _amused_ at what had happened, tickled quite a lot. He chuckled.
>
> Victor Stamp had been cheated by fate, as it were, that was the meaning of this. He had accepted this last hand as decisive, as a _to be or not to be_ wager. And fate had fooled him with a _To be_!
>
> He had painted without effort a passable picture! Irony of ironies, it had been granted to him to do the trick. It was worth nothing -- from any point of view; for of course no one would give anything for a picture of that sort today, unless it had a Name attached to it (and Stamp was not a name) and not much then. But it was amusing it should have turned out that way. It altered nothing -- he had wasted two more hours, that was all. He was _not_ going to put his head in the gas-oven, however. And that was that. He croaked out a short guttural growl of laughter.[5]

Victor's ironic laughter[6] is a recognition of the painful fact that, for him, there is no easy exit, from art or from life, and that, to the problems posed by both, there are no easy solutions. Indeed no! In fact, Lewis shows that it is more possible for society to provide an outlet for Victor's talents as a "faker" -- a paid copier or forger,[7] who produces authentic-looking versions of the work of famous painters — than for Victor to be recognized and employed, as a bona-fide painter and artist in his own right. Therefore, because he wishes to fulfil the "masculine" role by supporting Margot (rather than by accepting her continued support of him[8]), Victor becomes a "faker" of the work of famous artists, in the employ of the unscrupulous Freddie Salmon and his accomplice Abershaw.[9]

Both Abershaw and Salmon are mercenaries who exploit art, and artists, by selling, under false pretenses, fake "masterpieces," painted by impoverished artists, whom they pay to produce convincing "versions" of the work of famous artists. The conflict between themselves and Victor, as reluctant "faker," represents the conflict between the "lumpen" bourgeoisie, and the honest working-class, or real worker, so to speak. In another sense, this conflict represents Lewis's depiction of the trap into which the poor fall in a society where opportunity is dictated by class and roots, and where crime is an available alternative, therefore, for the proud unemployed, who reject the dole. The contrast between Salmon and Abershaw, on the one hand, and Victor and Margot, on the other, is Lewis's indication of the distinction between being deprived and being depraved -- while Salmon and Abershaw are not socio-economically deprived, they are morally and aesthetically depraved. Margot and Victor, conversely, are both socially and economically deprived, but cherish values and ideals which are foreign to this law-breaking pair. Lewis reveals all of these factors in the following passage, which also externalizes Margot's recognition of them:

> Victor shook his head.
>
> "Forgery's not in my line."
>
> "You could start on Monday," said Abershaw.
>
> "Thanks awfully. Nothing doing. I should make a bum forger."
>
> "You wouldn't have to forge the _signatures_!" cried Abershaw, in a sudden explosion of almost frenzied roguishness. "Only _the pictures_.'"
>
> "Thanks, old man. I prefer to go on the dole," said Victor.
>
> "Love on the dole!" Abershaw embalmed in a guttural chuckle the title of the play, and rolled his eyes merrily at Margot, who responded with a sickly smiling to his pleasantry. There was no question but what the underworld of the half-real was getting out-of-hand. The creatures who had crept out of that False-bottom beneath all things were taking an interest in Victor. They were commencing to sniff around her precarious nest.
>
> Here was a strange and disturbing proposal! And she believed that for a moment Victor had hesitated. He had seemed reluctant to say _No_. That was the Australian coming out (and she was conscious of the distant shadow of Botany Bay -- there was no use blinking the facts of history!). But what a temptation, all the same, to be put in the way of a hungry man, living on cheap tea and unable to find his rent!
>
> This horrid Abershaw had been despatched to entrap Victor into some criminal scheme. They lay in wait, of course, for a man of Victor's stamp, until he was up against it. Then they came and tried to persuade him to become a criminal, in order to keep body and soul together.[10]

In the capacity of paid "faker," (a job which he eventually accepts in sheer desperation[11]), Victor faces the compromise of his integrity as a person _and_ as an artist. He is constitutionally unable to continue such a career of deception, and soon decides to abandon the "job," in a fit of cathartic rage, and characteristic honesty. In response to the inevitable conflict with his illicit employers about his improvised version of a Van Gogh self-portrait, Victor impulsively puts his foot through the painting, and retrieves his self-esteem.[12] In Victor's subsequent indictment of the unscrupulous pair (Abershaw and Salmon) and their nefarious business (which exploits impecunious artists while it violates art), Victor presents a critique of class society more spontaneous and real than any that his compulsively Communistic friend, Tristram Phipps, might have intoned. Angrily,

Victor comments:

> "Yes, it's his [Freddie's] asthma! Call it asthma. I'd rather do anything else, anyway. To sit here doing my stuff, day in, day out, under a blasted dealer's eye, is more than I can stomach. I'm through! The gentleman dealer too! God -- these high-hatting money-spinners! That's what gets me down most, about these nasty birds! They are sent by their Mitropan pappas, with their names changed, to Oxford or Cambridge to be polished up -- to learn how to cheat people better! To get themselves a nasty little sham polish on their lowbred hides, to trick with, in shady trade! And that they get away with it shows the world's an outsize sucker, that deserves all it gets and more!"[13]

In Victor, Lewis creates a working-class protagonist, who, (unlike his counterpart, Vincent,[14] in The Vulgar Streak), does not destroy himself. Instead, Victor is destroyed by the circumstances arising from the inevitable clash between his own values or integrity, and the devious forces of crime and avarice, which Victor himself is ill-equipped to handle or even to fully understand. These forces are disguised as dilettantism and political activism, and are represented by Salmon and Abershaw, the fake-art hustlers, and by the gun-running pseudo-activist, Sean O'Hara.

However, the story of Victor's destruction is only one of the themes which are developed contrapuntally, in this complex novel. Another theme is the growth of the person, Margot, who develops from the child-woman who is Victor's fiancee, into an intuitively knowing, assertive, but loving person who walks beside the man she loves -- albeit to their eventual death.[15] In his development of the persona of Margot, Lewis can be seen as thematically exploring the meaning of death as a part of life; at the end of the novel, it seems that, though these lovers do die, their love and the values which they represent do not. In fact, at the end of the novel, that love, and

Margot, the person whom Lewis shows as nurturing it as a sacred form of knowledge, which transcends mere objective reality, are immortalized. This immortalization is recognized, ironically enough, through the consciousness of Lewis's arch-player, Percy Hardcaster, the professional Marxist-politico. In a Spanish jail as a result of his unwise participation in a gun-running scheme of O'Hara, which is the same Spanish expedition which ends in the deaths of Margot and Victor, Percy has a vision and new recognition of Margot and what she represents. In the person of Margot, Percy recognizes an assertion of the true rights of those who love, the rights of real humanity. The human quality of Margot's love and values is the ultimate lesson that Percy learns. This is the lesson that proves that the depersonalization of people into a faceless, inanimate stereotype called "the masses" is not a true vision of the nature of humanity, or of human society, as it ideally should be. His insight into the nature of Margot's love for, and loyalty to Victor, opens up, for Percy, a new understanding that, indeed, "_the_ people" are still _people_ -- persons with the inalienable right to live and to love as _they_ choose. This message is clearly conveyed in Lewis's description of the imprisoned Percy, who, in an uncharacteristic psychic experience, has what amounts to a vision of the dead Margot:

> Swollen with affected speechlessness, Percy proceeded to give a sculpturesque impersonation of THE INJURED PARTY. His cell-mates watched him surreptitiously, with an admiration it was out of their power to withhold. Heavily clamped upon his brick-red countenance, held in position by every muscle that responded to Righteous Wrath, was a mask which entirely succeeded the workaday face. It was the mask of THE INJURED PARTY (model for militant agents in distress). Obedient to the best technique of party-training, he sustained it for a considerable time.

> But meanwhile a strained and hollow voice, part of a sham-culture outfit, but tender and halting, as if dismayed at the sound of its own bitter words, was talking in his ears, in a reproachful singsong. It was denouncing him out of the past, where alone now it was able to articulate; it was singling him out as a man who led people into mortal danger, people who were dear beyond expression to the possessor to the passionate, the artificial, the unreal, yet penetrating, voice, and crying to him now to give back, she implored him, the young man, Absolom, whose life he had had in his keeping, and who had somehow, unaccountably, been lost, out of the world and out of Time! He saw a precipice. And the eyes in the mask of THE INJURED PARTY dilated in a spasm of astonished self-pity. And down the front of the mask rolled a sudden tear, which fell upon the dirty floor of the prison.[16]

Politics and Society -- Gillian and Jack

In The Revenge for Love, society is represented by the world of the hustlers Sean O'Hara, Abershaw and Salmon, of the aristocratic radicals Tristram and Gilliam Phipps, the professional Marxist-agitator Percy Hardcaster, and the bourgeois businessman and sensualist, Jack Cruze. Lewis employs these characters to people a microcosmic world in which the negative qualities and aspirations which they represent exist in rampant opposition to the positive values of tenderness, loyalty and devotion which are the norms in the private world of Margot and Victor Stamp. Margot and Victor, therefore, stand for the direct opposites of everything symbolized by these other characters. In a sense, then, all of the characters in the novel are iconographic representations of negative or positive values, of human negation or affirmation, or of mixtures of both extremes of values or traits. But they are highly dramatic and vibrant icons, as is seen in the descriptions of Jack Cruze and Gillian Phipps.

Both Jack and Gillian embody parallel reflections of a lustful sensuality which seems almost perverse in its single-mindedness. On the one hand, Jack's insistent carnality is almost comical because of his lack of intellectual sophistication (despite what might be termed his "street-smarts"). On the other hand, Lewis shows that Gillian's intellectualism intensifies the anti-humanistic effect of her arrogant sensuality, in a curiously malignant way. Jack is fascinated by Gillian's aristocratic roots and her audacious sensuality; Gillian is entertained by Jack's sexual ebullience; their mutual self-centredness makes them a perfect match. Lewis describes their first openly sexual interplay, as follows:

> Jack turned his head, slow as if his neck had been properly stiff, a half-inch at a time, and looked at her full-on -- it was the first straight look he'd given since he had come in and seen her without her clothes through the curtains. Her eyes were laughing and his were grinning. They grinned and laughed with their eyes without speaking. They looked into each other deep down -- *as far as each went*. And Jack pushed forward, as you might explain it for him, that disreputable Mr. Porker he'd been hiding up all along, and the Old Thug too (where one went the other went). He stuck out his muzzle of cave-man indigo (for he was blue on the chin though blond on the crown and as sharp as a fretsaw) as if to say, 'Stand forth, you unmentionable member of the Cruze household and show the lady what a fine stout lad you are!' Thug speaking to his brother-brute, you see.
>
> This eye-play went on for quite a while, he staring straight into hers, and giving her a wicked peep of all that he'd been keeping fastened down on the floor. He put his hand round behind her body and drew it up against his, and she pressed up against him, leaning her head back and looking down her nose, as if she was measuring him a long way off, and trying to get a view of him upside-down -- her eyes with the lids dropped with just room to see.
>
> Her lips hung outside her face, in a scarlet pout, as if it was the inside of something slit open with a scalpel like the surgeons use, and that had curled out on opposite sides where the knife went in. Jack pulled her head down with his other hand and pushed his mouth into the wet cut. And how long he kissed her for he didn't know, when he heard the door open, the one from the scullery in the area. It was Tristy back with his yellow ochre.
>
> Jack backed out and gave her a rather hard push, for she didn't seem to take any notice of Tristy's coming in in the other room. They would have been fixed there together still, when he came in, it seemed to Jack, if it had rested with her.[17] (The italics are mine.)

Herself raised in privileged international diplomatic circles, Gillian is married to the idealistic young Marxist painter, Tristram, who is also Victor's friend, "Tristy." Together, they live like the poor, whom Gillian patronizes as the suitable backdrop to the drama of fashionable Communism, in which she sees herself as the unquestioned heroine. Gillian's only loyalties are to herself and to the massic psychic-high which she enjoys in the role of pseudo-radical, at the expense of the true working-class person, for whom she has no real respect, and of whom Margot is a representative. With characteristic insight, Margot recognizes Gillian's insincerity and malevolence, in a scene at the welcoming party held for the heroically wounded Percy, when Margot bumps into Gillian, accidentally soiling the latter's expensive dress.

Margot has gone to fetch something to eat from the buffet table for Victor. On her way back to him, she bumps into Gillian:

> While taking a sharp turn, in her haste, around the corner of a biggish party of Red gossips, Margot collided head on with another hurrying form, and the plate of salmon flew down to the floor, where it was broken, the food scattering to left and right. The hard-boiled egg shot away like a squash-racket ball, to disappear among the legs of the debating society she had been negotiating.
>
> 'Can't you look where you're going?' she heard an imperious voice exclaiming, as she was bowed down towards the shattered plate. She raised her eyes and as she did so observed that a portion of the salmon had marked with its oily pink pigment the surface of a party-frock, worn by the girl who had cannoned into her. And then the next moment she realized that this was none other than Gillian Phipps. She smiled in apologetic recognition.
>
> The face of Gillian Phipps still wore the mask of a moody hawk, that it had acquired while she had listened to the account of Hardcaster's ordeal by bed-pan. And now it was as a hawk -- which had surprised perhaps a peewit in the act of carrying a worm to its young -- that she stared down angrily at Margot Stamp.
>
> 'Good gracious, is it you, Margot? I'm sorry.'
>
> With an ill grace Gillian changed her tune -- altered it from the menacing clamour of the stronger vessel into the patronizing drawl with which those of drawing-room class address those of kitchen status.

> 'But what possesses you to go scuttling about with your head down?' she scolded. 'We might have injured each other! Are you hurt?'
>
> 'Not at all!' Margot said, in her rather unearthly, hollow voice. 'Are you?'[18]

Throughout the novel, bird images recur to imply character and reinforce personality.[19] In Lewis's description of this incident, these images reveal the negative elements which he evokes in Gillian's character, as well as the contrast in personality between her personality, and that of the much softer, yet more aware, Margot.

Lewis makes clear the fact, that, because of the differences in both personality and class-related attitudes, Margot has a far more sensitive understanding of Gillian, in all the inverted snobbery of her pseudo-radicalism, than Gillian has of herself, or of anyone else:

> Gillian Phipps was yet another person whom Margot could not find it in her heart to feel over-charitable about, though certainly she felt no animosity against her. She was painfully aware that Tristy's lady did not like her. She was conscious that her treatment at Gillian's hands very often slipped down on to the plane of patronage. Because Margot was not a 'lady' and because she had to speak slowly, and with a stately brittleness of intonation, not to betray the fact. And she guessed that there was something else -- although to that she was unable to give a name. However, the only way to keep this big proud girl in her place would have been to speak in the accents of Shoreditch to Notting Dale; to speak 'in character' -- to allow that to be fastened on her, like the placards hung round the necks of offending Jews in the Reich. And even then Gillian would have merely mocked her openly, instead of in the veiled way she was accustomed to do at present. Margot understood that no bridge existed across which she could pass to commune as an equal with this Communist 'lady' -- living in a rat-infested cellar out of swank (as it appeared to her) from her painfully constructed gimrack pagoda of gentility. Nor did she wish to very much, because -- for Victor's sake -- she dreaded and disliked all these false politics, of the sham underdogs (as she felt them to be), politics which made such a lavish use of the poor and the unfortunate, of the 'proletariat' -- as they called her class -- to advertise injustice to the profit of a predatory Party, of sham-underdogs athirst for power: whose doctrine was a universal Sicilian Vespers, and which yet treated the real poor, when they were encountered, with such overweening contempt, and even derision. She could not fathom the essence of this insolent contradiction: but association with such inhuman sectaries could be of no profit to any pukka underdog whatever, she saw that, and her concern

> was always for one whom she felt to be utterly helpless. For that Victor was a pukka underdog she saw quite well: though pukka had not yet been incorporated in her vocabulary, and all that has to be presented as what she thought, was, in fact, transacted upon the plane of emotion, where words were all mixed up with images.[20]
> (The italics are mine.)

When the issue of ideological truth versus Gillian's own romantic and egocentric world view arises, as a result of her contact (sexual and otherwise) with Percy Hardcaster, Gillian's egotism is revealed in all its brutishness and brutality. Because she is piqued by Hardcaster's unmasking of the childish and sensation-seeking nature of her ideological "commitment," Gillian prompts her new lover, Jack Cruze, to attack and brutalize Percy, whom he kicks repeatedly on the still-unhealed stump of his amputated leg. Both Gillian's and Jack's anger at Percy is sexually-based. Gillian, the revolutionary-groupie, resents Percy's revelation of her ideological game-playing, and the sexual rejection which this unmasking implies. Jack resents Percy as a potential rival for Gillian, and for all women. Both express this sexual anger with equal brutality and viciousness.

In a scene of searing violence, Lewis conveys his total condemnation of the egotism, brutality and viciousness which he shows as basic to the characters of personalities like Gillian and Jack. Both Gillian and Jack use, as the excuse for this unforgivable attack, the claim that Percy has in some way insulted Gillian's honour as a lady. Of course, this fact is laden with ironies, as there has been nothing ladylike about Gillian's sexually promiscuous behaviour with regard to both of these men. As always in Lewis's work, the inclusion of violence at this point is not simply gratuitous, but rather is part of his total treatment of violence as a projection of character, and of his exploration of the enigma of the inhumane behaviour of which humanity is capable. Of this ill-matched struggle between Jack and Percy, in Gillian's apartment, Lewis tells us:

> Old Jack's fighting glands were all in good order, thank you, there was never any question about that. What that had to do with Jack's _other_ glands, it's difficult to say. But they matched each other in a remarkable fashion. Gland for gland he was more irritable than most men, and he was in no mood now to miss an opportunity. Chance had delivered his worst sex-foe into his clutches. The interest of _all_ his glands was engaged in this transaction. Here was the bearer of offensively large bouquets to ladies. Here was the celebrated Red beau, back from the battle, who had scored off him in the skirt-hunt. Jack was a-tingle with what he felt had dropped into his mouth, in the way of revenge that would be sweet. Very sweet indeed.
>
> Grasping his crutch-sticks firmly at his sides, Percy again advanced. When he reached Jack, he attempted to force his way past him. Old Jack was as handy a man with his fist for his size as it would be possible to find, as natural a boxer as a flea in a jumper; and before Gillian could see what had come to pass between them there had been a sickening smack that walloped the damp air, in the dimness of the flat-room, and as if struck by a hammer, the body of Percy crashed at full length on the floor.
>
> 'Well done!' called out Gillian, clapping her hands, in imitation, it seemed, of the pugilistic report of flesh upon flesh. 'It serves him jolly well right! He's got what was coming to him!'
>
> Jack was jumping about like a Jack-in-the-box, unable to keep still.
>
> '_Now_ apologize to this lady here, you ugly swine, before I throw you out on your head!' he shrieked.
>
> Percy sat up, wiping blood from his nose. His weakness caused him to perspire excessively, and his eyes were watering from the effect of the blow. He made no reply as he scrambled to his feet, holding on to the table and wrenching himself up upon his rigid leg. The other two watched him do so in silence.
>
> Percy turned his head this way and that as if dazed. Then with extreme suddenness he whirled one of his walking-sticks in the air and brought it down upon Jack's head, at the same time flinging himself at the door. Before he could open it, Jack was upon him, his fists springing out from his sides, returning, and darting forward again, like deadly hammers of gum-elastic. And each time they tapped their target, with a wet smack, Percy's head crashed against the door; there were half a dozen crashes in quick succession in the time it would take a church clock to strike three. As Percy sank to the floor he clutched at Jack's leg.
>
> 'Let go of that!' shouted Jack, as he shook his leg free. 'Let go of my leg!'
>
> He sprang back as Percy rolled on the floor, and delivered a pile-driving kick at his fallen rival's weak spot, the mutilated stump.

> As the boot struck him, where the Spanish surgeon's knife had cut in, Percy Hardcaster turned over, with a bellowing groan, against the wall, and Jack sent in another one, after the first, to the same spot, with a surgical precision in the violent application of his shoe leather. And then he followed it with a third, for luck.
>
> Then Jack stepped back. He surveyed his handiwork with gleaming eyes, which feasted upon the writhing human body beneath him.[21]

This violent confrontation with Percy, Jack, and her own ego, leaves Gillian in a self-righteous rage, strangely enough. Unfortunately, she has learned nothing at all from her own humiliation by Percy, or from Percy's agony at the hands of Jack. Lewis makes this shocking fact ironically clear in the following paragraphs:

> Back in the flat, Gillian flung herself down and, with the deliberation of a person turning on a bathroom tap, wept into her hands. A couple of ounces of water, perhaps, were discharged by her tear-ducts, and flowed down between her fingers. She felt better.
>
> 'A great idea, this water-business!' she reflected. 'Poor dry-eyed he-men, they must be lost without that gadget.'
>
> She remained in the flat for half an hour after that. Jack had not put in an appearance by seven. He will keep out of the way! she commented to herself upon this typical absenteeism with disgust -- until the risk, as he supposes, has passed. A charming class! These sons of police constables, and working-class agitators, broken on the Lancashire looms and then in the class-war, they are six one and half a dozen the other! She did not know which she despised most. But, as that insolent old beast of a Percy had said, thumping himself on the chest, it was all for their sake that the Gillians and Tristrams of this world were going to make a revolution! And those who were not of the class for whom all this was being done had to be a sort of saint, as far as she could see, to stomach all that they had to stomach -- in the way of ingratitude, recrimination, and general brutality. She left the flat on her way to go and seek consolation from a girl friend, also a Communist -- feeling a very angry martyr, and seething with noblesse oblige. She was at the moment full of class-hatred of the class it was her hard lot to have to save.[22]

Ultimately, Gillian is confronted by her husband, Tristram, on the subject of Percy Hardcaster, who represents to Tristy the ideal example of the revolutionary Marxist figure. In this confrontation, Gillian fully reveals her total lack of respect for her husband -- a disrespect for others which is the hallmark of her arrogant antihumanism. She has never respected Tristy enough to recognize that he has opinions of his own. Therefore, she is surprised and annoyed at his support of Hardcaster in the face of her new disparagement of the man whose revolutionary "fan" she had once been only too eager to be. These facts are evident in the following passage:

> Tristy raised his eyebrows in a supercilious arc, and Gillian saw that she was now in the presence of a highly incensed fanatic, not encountered before; with whom she would have to watch her step, if she set store by the issue. He looked at her as if he might have addressed her sternly as Woman! His party badge gleamed upon the lapel of his jacket, or at all events it forced itself upon her notice, like the star of the film-sheriff, out to get the bad man dead or alive. And an angry smile came and went upon her lips as she observed all this. She leant over and took another cigarette from the box on the table.[23]

In his delineation of this clash between Tristy and Gillian, Lewis presents us with the eternal conflict between true ideological commitment and the ego-centred insincerity of merely fashionable political game-playing. The implications of this conflict between husband and wife are accentuated by the fact that Tristy does not yet know of the brutality which has been meted out to Hardcaster by his wife and her new admirer; Tristy's support of Hardcaster in this argument with Gillian is unequivocally a product of his own sincere Marxist enthusiasm. This argument is not simply a Lewisian example of the wide differences in real values, ideology, and idealism that can separate man and woman, husband and wife, or other individuals. Moreover, it is a demonstration of the various kinds of conflict that inevitably exist in any relationship which is based too narrowly on political ideology -- as varied as the different individualized interpretations of this may be. Lewis's dramatic dialogue is a re-enactment of these conflicts, which are as old as ideology itself:

> 'Gillian,' said Tristram, but beginning quietly, with her name, 'it is to free the working-class that we have dedicated our lives. Without them we are *nothing*. They are our *raison d'être*. To speak as you have of the poor suffering masses is a crime! It is as if you yourself were trampling on the faces of the poor and rubbing salt into their wounds, out of sheer wantonness. It is as if you were siding with the enemies of civilized man, the kites and vultures of the underworlds of High Finance. It is *you* who are in danger of falling into fascism. I will go so far as to assert that what you have just said makes me wonder if you have ever been a Communist at heart at all!'
>
> Gillian leapt to her feet, and the expression that she directed down upon Tristy was a good imitation of one of the looks she had levelled at Percy Hardcaster earlier in the day, when he had gone so far as to call her Communism in question.
>
> 'What sickening blah!' she screamed. 'Quatch! Nonsense! *Nonsense*! You are as simple as a sheep -- anyone can fool you! Why don't you *think*, instead of just mooning around! Is my *raison d'etre* some drunken stupid slum woman? Have you so poor an opinion of yourself that you believe you exist only by permission of some fat little imposter of an ex-boiler-maker, gone Red to feather his nest, who would sell you every time to anyone who bid a couple of tanners for you? Haven't you the rudiments of an eye in your head, to help you to see what the working-class really and truly *are*! Or don't you ever see anything -- except *abstractions*? Like your pictures! It's all right as pictures. But you are dealing with men and women of flesh and blood. A mob of treacherous idiots! That's what you're doing! -- who snigger up their sleeves at you for the sucker you are; yes, and would string you up to the nearest lamp-post as soon as look at you! It is with *that* that you have to make your Communism rhyme!'
>
> Tristy rose, like one of the Zoo's most stately, gauche, and inhuman animals, a frosty smile culled among the chilliest fields of theoretic romance playing about his lips, which had been visibly paling as she proceeded.
>
> 'I'm afraid we disagree, Gillian,' he said, 'in a way I had not supposed it possible we should. It is you who show no sense of reality, however. If you felt like that about the general run of men, then Communism would be the most *unreal* thing it is possible to conceive. If you were so self-centred that you held it up against people that they were not perfectly rational and virtuous beings, then to be a Communist would be to class yourself as a lunatic sectarian, crying out for a strait-jacket. I don't know what Percy Hardcaster has been saying to you. But you have evidently misunderstood him, and allowed your personal feelings to run away with you.[24]

Additionally, through this angry exchange, Lewis gives the reader (and Gillian also), the clearest indication of the real integrity of Tristy's commitment to Communism, and, moreover, of his basic humanism. This insight is one which illuminates the personalities of both of these characters. It is also related to Lewis's insistence in this novel, that mere, isolated ideology -- whatever its basis, and whatever its type -- will ultimately be as shallow, callous, and ego-centric as is the personality depicted in the character of a "Gillian Communist."

Margot and Co. -- The Search for New Images

It seems inadequate to consider the portrait of Margot as one which is relevant to a reading of The Revenge for Love only. Indeed, Lewis's depiction of Margot can be seen as representing the culmination of a study of developmental phases in the female, progressing through a series of images of the female condition which Lewis explores dramatically throughout his novels and short stories. These portraits are really explorations of female psycho-sexuality, in a variety of stages of development. Seen thematically, this series of portraits involves such varied figures of female passivity as Madame Péronnette (of the short story Beau Séjour),[25] and Tets (The War Baby),[26] the gentlewoman Jane (The Red Priest),[27] the well-bred April (The Vulgar Streak),[28] and the suicidal Hester (Self Condemned). It also includes such representative figures as the Lesbian Ape (The Apes of God), the sacrificed female sinner (Malign Fiesta),[29] and culminates in the evolving personality of Margot herself, as well as being represented in some of the main preoccupations in The Revenge for Love.

Aping New Images

Lewis's progressive study of the various stages of the development of the female psyche encompasses the relatively static passivity of a Jane Greevey (The Red Priest), or an April (The Vulgar Streak). It also includes a middle passage, where Lewis shows us female figures in search of a new psycho-sexual self-concept. Such figures are represented in the portraits of the Lesbian Ape, or the young male homosexual Dan (The Apes of God), or such pseudo-masculine figures as Agnes Irons, Margot's friend (The Revenge for Love). These are all figures who, in appearance, and/or life-style, challenge the traditional norms of femininity and, by extension, of masculinity. Lewis shows that they are involved in a search for a new sense of themselves as people, primarily, and (in the case of the females) as women, secondarily. However, Lewis also reveals that their quest is no simple one, for he indicates that such individuals are testing their newly self-defined reality against the more accepted reality of established and traditional images and definitions of the sexes. As such, they are also risking the loss of the security of acceptance within the conventional norms, and the ridicule that inevitably attends any efforts at change or challenge.

Lewis typifies this kind of ridicule in his satirical treatment of the Lesbian Ape (The Apes of God). Searching for a new identity, she has chosen a decadent male iconography -- the iconography of dominant machismo, and exaggerated masculinity. Thus, Lewis shows us the Lesbian Ape as a caricature of aggressive masculinity -- the image of the army officer being seen here as the epitome of male aggressiveness. Dressed in almost military style, the Lesbian Ape is a walking hodge-podge of masculine symbols, which is not convincing, but rather, amusing. She is a satirical symbol of the mechanistic creatures which male-dominated society, on the one hand, and war, on the other hand, have taught men to be. Clearly, Lewis's Lesbian Ape is not a figure of brutality; instead, she is an ironic caricature of the perverted male image of brutal supermasculinity. Her very incongruity is Lewis's satirical reflection of the perversion, _in human terms_, that inevitably results from a distorted insistence on ultramasculinity.[30] As such, she represents the assertion that, when the female undertakes the distorted _macho_ role of the supermasculine male, she too becomes as ridiculous and self-defeating as her aggressive male counterpart. In the following description, Lewis shows, with surprisingly gentle satire, that the Lesbian Ape's aggressiveness is mere irritability, and her effort at a masculine appearance is mere egocentricity:

> She was wiry and alert with hennaed hair bristling, en-brosse. In khaki-shorts, her hands were in their pockets, and her bare sunburnt legs were all muscle and no nonsense at all. There was something that reminded Dan of Dick Whittingdon, for she was bald, he remarked with a deep blush, on the top of her head. Only there the resemblance ended it seemed, for whereas Dick was anxious, that was easy to see, to disguise his naked scalp, _this_ strong-minded person had a peculiar air of being proud of it all the time (to be bald, like the ability to grow a moustache, was a masculine monopoly). A march had been stolen, with her masculine calvity. But a strawberry-pink pull-over was oddly surmounted by a stiff Radcliffe-Hall collar, of antique masculine cut -- suggestive of the masculine hey-day, when men were men starched-up and stiff as pokers, in their tandems and tilburys. The bare brown feet were strapped into spartan sandals. A cigarette-holder half a foot long protruded from a firm-set jaw.[31]

Thus, the Lesbian Ape emerges as an amusing, but important and meaningful, trans-sexual icon, representing the search for new psycho-sexual identity, because he, also, chooses artificial and tangential patterns for the expression of his inability to empathize with the traditionally defined sexual roles. Indeed, it is fair to argue that both Dan and his sister-Ape are shown by Lewis as amusingly futile figures, because their search is not marked by a total rejection or transcending of the larger psycho-social or psycho-cultural framework which dictates the sexual roles that they both contravene. Therefore, their rebellion against, or inability to conform to, these roles, seems more like a trans-sexual tantrum, a caricature of existing sexual modes, than a serious or mature effort at true liberation. Thus, Lewis gives us a hilarious picture of Dan, dressed "in drag," at the whim of his imperious idol, Horace:

> A lovely tall young lady it was, of a most drooping and dreamy presence -- most modest of *Merveilleuses* that ever stepped upon a palpitating planet screwed into position by a cruel polarity of sex -- in consequence compelled to advertise a neck of ivory, nipples of coral, a jewelled ankle of heart-breaking beauty-line -- extremities, for the rest, superbly plantigrade -- a miracle of blunt-heeled -- metatarsally-dominant -- proportion -- under the arch of whose trotter a fairy coach made out of a cobnut could be readily driven. What has not been the lot of girls since the first sombre circles of Bluestockings assembled, or the rampant feminist denied The Sex the bland receptive idiocy of does -- *that* was embodied once more in Dan -- as if to say 'You must come to poor defeated Man if you desire to find what was once the Eternal Feminine -- alas only in Man is now to be found the true-blue Ladyhood or Girlishness -- by Man invented, by Man betrayed!' That is what those sad and melting eyes, with a shrinking modesty, proclaimed.[34]

Agnes and Hester

From a retrospective point of view, it is interesting and fitting that Lewis, as a natural social satirist and commentator, saw the ironic, and, indeed, tragic-comic edge to the search for new psycho-sexual images. This is a search which, in our own times, has become a primary agent in societal change, as proven in rising divorce statistics in modern societies. (Similarly, mass movements like the "Gay Liberation Movement" in the United States of America today are clear manifestations of the force with which this search has affected modern society.) And, indeed, until women are allowed to be people, as well as females, or until they wrest from men this privilege, males will continue to be amazed at the apparently inexplicable tide of female rage which has traditionally been depicted in such archetypal female figures as Medea and Clytemnestra. Hester (in _Self Condemned_) represents the tragically self-destructive, inwardly-directed expression of this rage. She is also the tragic opposite of the Lesbian Ape, or of Lewis's other pseudo-feminist, pseudo-masculine Amazons, like the dowdy but clear-sighted "Ghastly Girl" of _The Red Priest_,[35] or Agnes Irons, Margot's unlikely friend, in _The Revenge for Love_.

Agnes, a golf enthusiast,[36] has invested her golf winnings, symbolically enough, in an impressive wooden desk, which she proudly shows to her visiting friend, Margot.[37] Agnes has the automatic laugh of the Lewisian British good sport,[38] and the stance of the conquering _hero_, "starched-collared and jacketed, a scotch-tweeded amazon, equipped for the sex-war with an alarming chin and jet-black eye."[39] However, Lewis makes it clear that Agnes does not lack sensitivity or responsiveness to the plight of her penniless friend Margot. Similarly, despite her crisp sportsmanlike facade (and her armour of deafening laughter), Agnes clearly has her own areas of gentleness. This unusual friendship between Margot and Agnes is Lewis's most positive delineation of female solidarity among women who, despite their differences in life-styles and sensibility, can understand and empathize with each other's special types of vulnerability. In this regard, Lewis tells us:

> It was at this point that the laughing stopped. Agnes seemed to admit that even her sense of humour required a rest sometimes. Beyond a certain age -- and Margot judged that thirty-nine summers was about the correct mark in the case of Agnes, sometimes she looked very creased and stained out in the street -- once you had passed whatever the age might be, a quarter of an hour at a stretch was about all that could be managed, in the way of really hearty and incessant laughter. Then one must rest on one's oars for a bit -- discharging an occasional guffaw for the say-so.
>
> But the cue for a spell of quiet in this instance was the mention of the art of the Cube. For the humorous mind that subject would normally be irresistible. It would be the signal for an orgy of jokes. But having regard to Margot's feelings, this unfortunately must be nipped in the bud and sternly repressed. So Agnes became rather suddenly deflated. A somewhat careworn shell a little alarmingly took the place of the 'dynamic' personality. The young veteran of the links -- whose nickel-plated trophies stood in a row upon the mantelpiece -- showed for a moment the strain of the White Man's Burden and of ten thousand rounds of golf.
>
> 'And how is Victor?' she inquired dutifully and soberly, at this, as if asking after a sick person. 'Going strong, as usual?'[40]

Agnes, the intransigently balding Lesbian Ape, and the frumpily serene "Ghastly Girl" can all be seen as Lewis's representations of the evolving new woman of the future. They are all manless, but cheerfully so. At best they are happy, self-accepting people; at worst, they are comic or ironic icons. But most importantly, Lewis shows that they are still searching, still groping, and therefore still vital, still alive. Their tragic opposite is to be found in Hester of Self Condemned. Lewis's last description of the self-destructive Hester is a chilling one:

> At length René got to his feet and said, 'Where is she? Shall we go?'
>
> 'Okay, Professor.'
>
> The man walked beside him, his eye in the corner of his head, ready to catch him as he fell. They stopped, the policeman drew from his pocket a large key, opened a door.
>
> René was not conscious of passing through the door, but almost immediately he found himself leaning bodily upon the policeman, his head almost on the shoulder of his escort, and looking down on a much-soiled collection of objects. They were arranged in the most paradoxical way. Like a graffito the essentials were picked out. He recognized the low-bottomed silhouette of a female figure, the clothes shapeless and black with blood. Slightly to one side there was a pair of legs in horrible detachment, like a pair of legs for a doll upon a factory table, before they have been stuck on to the body. At the top, was the long forward-straining, as it were yearning neck. Topmost was the bloodstained head of Hester, lying on its side. The poor hair was full of mud, which flattened it upon the skull. Her eye protruded: it was strange it should still have the strength to go peering on in the darkness.[41]

Hester chooses a macabre suicide (throwing herself under a truck), as a solution to the psychic impasse which her marriage to Rene has become. René's refusal, and, in fact, his inability,[42] to return from Canada to England, as Hester wishes, is only one point of conflict between these two. The issue of repatriation is only the symptom of all the differences, in aspirations, ideals, and personality, which separate this couple.[43] René's acceptance[44] of an appointment with a small Canadian university is the apparent catalyst of Hester's suicide. Obviously, the path of hope and self-renewal for Hester would be to leave René and Canada, and return to England, and there attempt to start a new and independent life of her own. However, Lewis shows that such a move would require of Hester a greater autonomy and a more active sense of self than she possesses, or has learnt to exercise. She cannot set out, like her more aggressive sisters (Agnes, the Lesbian Ape, or the "Ghastly Girl"), in search of a new and independent identity and lifestyle for herself -- however confused this search might be. Instead, she chooses to complete the cycle of metaphysical destruction which she has suffered in the marriage to René, in their grim, early immigrant days, with final physical self-destruction. The question arises, of course, as to whether Lewis is not indicating, through his depiction of Hester's suicide, that physical suicide is perhaps the logical correlative of such female psychic passivity as is Hester's.[45] This passivity has been epitomized in Hester's acceptance of the traditional role in marriage which has been hers, and by her continued devotion to a man who represents, as René does, the archetype of the emotionally alienated male figure.

Symbolically, also, Lewis seems to indicate that Hester's shattered body on the slab in the morgue is the replica of her own fragmented self-image, and the utter vulnerability which must result from the sort of psychic rejection which has been a continued part of Hester's relationship with René. Lewis's message here also may be that, if women are to escape from the paralyzing roles dictated by certain kinds of relationships with certain kinds of men, then they will have to destroy completely the male-created myth of femininity, which they have hitherto accepted as self or personhood. For Hester, René's world is _her_ entire world, and René's destiny has been _her_ destiny. Therefore, what she translates as his ultimate rejection of her, or her wishes, becomes a cause for total self-rejection. Clearly, for Hester and her kind of woman, the choice is between the pain of growth and the search for new directions as a person, or the agony of self annihilation, on the literal or symbolic levels. For some of us, Lewis indicates, with timeless sadness, choosing death is easier than meeting the challenge of changing ourselves and our lives.

The Revolutionary Sinner

In terms of his progressive studies of the female condition and assertions and growth of self-hood, Lewis creates the polar opposite of Hester in the figure of the sacrificed female sinner of Malign Fiesta (the third novel in the trilogy The Human Age). This trilogy projects a Lewisian vision of life after life, of human choices and their eternal consequences. In this setting, Pullman, Lewis's ultimately satirized, male artist-figure, pursues his ego-centred machinations, on the level of the super-natural.[46] In books one and two of this trilogy (The Childermass and Monstre Gai, respectively), female figures are largely absent. In the third book, Malign Fiesta, women are represented as negative icons,[47] callous, anonymous Amazons, like the enforcers of Hell,[48] or brutalized, decadent figures.[49] In this world of indifferent, even antiseptic sadism, Pullman is the privileged guest of a sinisterly handsome, sophisticated, homosexual,[50] and implacably anti-female[51] Satan, called Sammael.[52] However, it is crucial to note that the only revolutionary figure of this trilogy *is* a female. She is a sinner who, in Hell, is faced with the horrible fate of being eaten alive by the Yahoo-like creatures of the plains of Hell -- wild creatures, who are part animal, and part human,[53] and completely predatory. Nonetheless, she dares to express her rejection of the Devil as represented by Sammael.[54] Lewis describes this woman's fate with a fantastic, but heart-rending violence, which conveys a quality of apocalyptic vision:

> He [Sammael] flung the door open, getting bitten in the hand by one of the ravening beasts. There burst into the car the fearful stench, there was a scarlet flash of sexual monstrosity, the whining and snorting of a score of faces -- the beasts leaping on one another's backs, so that several appeared to be about to spring on to the roof of the car. -- Scores of sinewy arms terminating in claws shot into the car, and snatched the woman out of it.
>
> There was her body, shoulder-high, for the fraction of a second, in the midst of the stinking pack -- the sickening odour increasing in intensity. Just for that fractional speck of time a dozen claws could be seen defiling her person. The most terrible scream Pullman had ever heard filled aurally that speck of time. The car gathered speed, the door was violently closed, and that was that. The silence was tremendous and *Pullman was alone -- more alone than he had ever been with anyone in his life -- with the lord Sammael*.
>
> Sammael sat, spitting blood into a white handkerchief, after sucking the gash in his hand.
>
> Pullman was trembling: the suddenness of the denouement, and the shocking momentary vision of ferocity had deeply shaken him. The woman's denunciation of Sammael immediately before the climax had affected him in a way he had to be very careful not to reveal. His sympathy for the woman grew and subterraneously developed; and when he *saw* (with unexpected suddenness) the unsurpassable horror of her punishment he started trembling as in response to horror, because of the violent conflict in his psyche. He was on the verge of an outburst. *The woman, praying and crossing herself, was doing what he ought to have been doing. She was defying the superhuman strength of the infernal power*.[55] (The italics are mine.)

Through his delineation of this incident, Lewis seems to show that the male heart, along with that of the survival-motivated Pullman, might well shudder with reluctant respect for this representation of female loyalty and courage. Perhaps Lewis is also implying here that, in a world of psycho-social dissolution, it is through the female principle that such revolutionary emotions as faith, loyalty, love and commitment, often may be most vividly expressed, and re-affirmed.

Margot

The portrait of Margot may be the culmination of Lewis's study of developmental phases in the female psyche, but he shows that Margot's search for a new sense of self is expressed in a predictably, confused, and convincingly human fashion. Lewis allows Margot to search for her new images or sources of identification in ironically mixed places -- which include the works of Woolf, Tennyson,[56] and, apparently, Ruskin.[57] In the garden of her athletically aggressive friend, Agnes, Margot contemplates her well-thumbed copy of Woolf's A Room of One's Own.[58] She reacts to the peaceful natural setting, and to the contents of her female mentor's work with nostalgia and a wistful sense of the financial independence and intellectual activity which are missing from her own deprived life-style:

> Here indeed was a very Park of One's Own for a solitary woman; and that was distinctly a luxury, to have attached to the regulation room of one's own, if one had one -- if, like Agnes Irons, one had lived by oneself in a posh little service-flatlet! Margot almost wished she could sail forth from this spotlessly tidy bachelor cell to go to dinner with Victor in Soho, as in the days before she was 'Mrs. Stamp,' as she had nicknamed herself, all over again. Victor was so happy then! It was for Victor's sake that she desired to go back and retrace her steps; to sacrifice once more, upon the altar of Australian passion, 'the hermit girl' of her a little enervated fabrication -- the clever picture of a lonely girl, to whose immaculate conception Virginia Woolf had so decisively contributed.[59]

Margot's response to Woolf's feminist doctrine is mixed with a highly emotional response to romantic Tennysonian lines.[60] However, Margot's literary day-dream is shattered by the noisy arrival of the ebullient Agnes.[61] Agnes presents an altogether different female image from that of Margot. This is an image of financial autonomy, and of successful competitiveness and achievement (in the male-dominated world of amateur and professional golf). By implication, Lewis seems to indicate that, for Margot (and for academically and socio-economically deprived women like her), the search for new images of self will not lie in the study of traditional literature. Rather, this search can be more successful, if it is reinforced by socio-economic opportunity or security, and based on the pursuit of individual interest and achievement -- as in the case of Agnes Irons. In short, rather than turning to anachronistic or false images in literature,[62] each woman (and man) must seek to create her or his own image of humanity and of self, out of individual experience and choice. As such, it is Lewis's further implication that there will be as many new images or concepts of masculinity or femininity as there are individuals seeking these new definitions.

Because Margot is a working-class girl, the usual avenues of self-fulfilment and autonomy (as represented by educational opportunities, and socio-economic security),[63] remain closed to her. Yet, the novel reveals that through her experience of loving, she finds her own source of individual growth and reality in the increasing awareness and fuller consciousness of the meaning of life which she gains from the uniquely human experience of caring deeply for another.

Footnotes

[1] This novel first appeared in 1937, published by Cassell; it was published also in 1952, by Methuen (London), and by Henry Regnery (Chicago).

[2] See Chapter II of this thesis.

[3] This conflict forms one of the major themes for discussion in the novel Tarr, published by The Egoist Press, in 1918.

[4] Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 88.

[5] Ibid., 85.

[6] Cf. Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," in the London Mercury, 30.180 (October, 1934), 509-515, and the collection entitled The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories, 3-9, and 243-246.

[7] Cf. the parallel themes of forgery and "faking," in this novel and in The Vulgar Streak.

[8] The Revenge for Love, 78.

[9] Ibid., 248-251.

[10] Ibid., 177.

[11] Margot has been jobless since the dissolution of the small lending library with which she had worked. Ibid., 78.

[12] Ibid., 262-263.

[13] Ibid., 263-264.

[14] Vincent, the protagonist of The Vulgar Streak, commits suicide.

[15] Victor and Margot, lost in a mountainous area in Spain after a storm, having abandoned O'Hara's gun-running scheme, wander in the darkness over a precipice, and die. See the reference to this accident in The Revenge for Love, 375.

[16] Ibid., 376-377.

[17] Ibid., 117-118. Cf. Percy's later comments on Gillian's sexual behaviour, see Ibid., 275.

[18] Ibid., 158-159.

[19] Cf. Lewis's use of the image of the bird, Ibid., 66, 170, 297, 298, and 299.

[20] Ibid., 159-160.

[21] Ibid., 212-214. As a result of this incident, Percy later contracts osteomylitis of the stump of his amputated leg. (See Ibid., 277.)

[22] Ibid., 218-219. See Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 146-154, and also Time and Western Man, 27-29. (Additionally, it should be noted that Gillian has used her pseudo-radical "alliance" with the working class as a justification of her sexual promiscuity. This justification was based on her false stereotypes of working-class life-styles and sexual behaviour. In this regard, compare M. Komarovsky, Blue Collar Marriage.)

[23] Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 224.

[24] Ibid., 225-227.

[25] "Beau Séjour" appeared in The Wild Body collection (published in 1927), 65-107.

[26] "The War Baby" was first published in Art and Letters (New Series) 2.1 (Winter, 1918-1919), 14-41. More recently, it appeared in the 1973 collection entitled Unlucky for Pringle: Unpublished and Other Stories by Wyndham Lewis, edited by C.J. Fox and R.T. Chapman, 85-108.

[27] See Sections I and II of Chapter IV of this thesis.

[28] See Section I of Chapter II of this thesis.

[29] Malign Fiesta is the third novel in the trilogy The Human Age, published by Methuen in 1955.

[30] Cf. K. Bednarik, The Male in Crisis; S. Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape; P. Chesler, About Men; W. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 267-284; J. Nichols, Men's Liberation: A New Definition of Masculinity, 109-120, 137-145, and 164-173; also, A. Pietropinto, and J. Simenauer, Beyond the Male Myth; also, B. Allen, "A Visit from Uncle Macho," R.E. Hartley, "Sex-Role Pressures and the Socialization of the Male Child," S.M. Jourard, "Some Lethal Aspects of the Male Role," I.F. Stone, "Machismo in Washington," and G. Steinem, "The Myth of Masculine Mystique," in J.H. Pleck and J. Sawyer, eds., Men and Masculinity, 5-6, 7-13, 21-29, 130-133, and 134-139, respectively. See also T. Roszak, "The Hard and the Soft: The Force of Feminism in Modern Times," in B. and T. Roszak, eds., Masculine/Feminine: Readings in Sexual Mythology and the Liberation of Women, 87-104; and G. Sheehy, Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life.

[31] Lewis, The Apes of God (Penguin), 234, or the Nash & Grayson edition, 222.

[32] These labels are all popular jargon for describing various aspects of the modern feminist movement in North America. (See *Ms.* magazine, VI, 8 (February, 1978), 52-53.

[33] Cf. Lewis, "The Family and Feminism," and "The 'Homo' the Child of the 'Suffragette,'" in *The Art of Being Ruled*, 187-227, and 244-246, respectively.

[34] Lewis, *The Apes of God* (Penguin), 475, or Nash & Grayson edition, 455.

[35] Lewis, *The Red Priest*, 129-137.

[36] It should be noted that golf was traditionally a game of males.

[37] Lewis, *The Revenge for Love*, 233-234.

[38] Ibid., 233-234, and 237. Cf. Lewis, "A Soldier of Humour," Part I, from *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories*, 309; also "Studies into the Art of Laughter," the *London Mercury*, 30.180 (October, 1934), 509-515; also "How Would You Expect the English to Behave?" *Saturday Night The Canadian Weekly*, 57.4 (October 4, 1941), 18-19.

[39] Lewis, *The Revenge for Love*, 232.

[40] Ibid., 238-239.

[41] Lewis, *Self Condemned*, 370-371.

[42] Ibid., 340-342.

[43] Ibid., 347-348, and 359-364.

[44] Ibid., 358-360.

[45] Cf. P. Chesler, *Women and Madness*, and E. Durkheim, *Suicide*, in this regard.

[46] Lewis, *The Human Age* (*Malign Fiesta*), 468-485.

[47] Ibid., 312-317, and 323-330.

[48] Ibid., 416-417.

[49] Ibid., 354-357.

[50] Ibid., 515.

[51] Cf. Ibid., 369 and 377.

[52] Cf. Ibid., 342-349, 350-357, and 457.

[53] Ibid., 377.

[54] Ibid., 370-371.

[55] Ibid., 372-373.

[56] Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 229-232.

[57] Ibid., 305-309.

[58] Cf. The "Ghastly Girl"'s reference to Woolf's work, The Red Priest, 132. Cf. also Lewis's comments about Woolf in Men Without Art, 158-171.

[59] The Revenge for Love, 230.

[60] Ibid., 231-232.

[61] Ibid., 232.

[62] With regard to the debate about the possible inauthenticity of Ruskin's Sesame and Lilies which first appeared in book form in 1866, and subsequently in 1900, see J. Carter and G. Pollard, An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets. (The essay in question, "Of Queen's Gardens," appeared under "Lilies" in Ruskin's text, but was previously delivered as a lecture in 1864, at the Town Hall, Manchester, on Wednesday, December 14th, in aid of the St. Andrew's Schools Fund. The pamphlet which resulted from this 1864 lecture became the revised version which appeared as an original in the 1866 text, as well as subsequently.)

[63] Compare Lewis's poignant reference to Margot's humble origins, The Revenge for Love, 230-231 and his delineation of the increasingly privileged socio-economic position of Mary, of The Red Priest. (See Sections III and IV of Chapter IV of this thesis.)

Margot -- A Study in Love and Growth

Love As A Form of Growth

Margot, the heroine of The Revenge for Love, is by no means the model of the liberated or assertive woman. Not legally married to Victor, with whom she lives, Margot nonetheless calls herself "Mrs. Stamp."[64] She is a working-class girl,[65] with no financial security, after being laid off from the small job she has held with the now defunct "Twopenny Lending Library."[66] Dutifully, she has taught herself the manners and the speech[67] of the educated classes, and the role of the "lady." As in the case of Vincent, of The Vulgar Streak,[68] this effort has drained her psychologically, to some extent, and has intensified her awareness of the force of class differences and of the class tradition.[69]

Lewis structures our introduction to Margot, and our subsequent meetings with her, by the use of images which suggest nurturing, sustaining, and mothering; or by images of gentle naturalness, as in the case of the bird image:[70]

> Her head of a small wistful seabird, delicately drafted to sail in the eye of the wind, and to skate upon the marbled surface of the waves -- with its sleek feathery chevelure, in long matted wisps -- arched downward on its neck to observe Lord Victor. The rhythm of his heaves, in his imposture of sleep, certainly approximated to the ocean. She hovered over him in her ecstasy of lovesickness, her eyes full of a dizzy gloating, rocked by the steady surge of his chest. Her eyes were almost popping out of her skull in the intensity of her desire to settle -- to skim down and settle: to ride there and to be at rest![71]

As in this picture of Margot watching her lover while he pretends to be asleep, Lewis shows that Margot's commitment to Victor encompasses both the patient caring,[72] and the fierce protectiveness of the mother animal:

> Victor slept. In sleep he was heroic, with the balance of the High Renaissance in the proud dispersal of his limbs. He slumbered upon Sean's cushions as if upon iron clouds, in a Michelangelesque abandon. Margot watched him, with the maternal patience of a tiny bird mounting guard over a giant cuckoo foisted upon it, which she loved more than the child of her own humble egg.[73]

However, her commitment to Victor is accompanied by a painful sense of apparent futility, which is related to her awareness of the potential futility of their own deprived lives. As the novel develops, her mood becomes more assertive, and more passionate. Lewis's initial projection of Margot's unhappy sense of their desperately poor situation provides an example of the combined pathos and lucidity which mark this portrait of female sensibility:

> Margaret wiped her face with her handkerchief, with some of the businesslikeness with which she would make-up. That the female headpiece was ill-plumbed was for Margaret a fact of a different order -- the cosmetic mind did not, with her, totally prevail. The eyes, as a cosmetic phenomenon, were one thing, but when they ran over with tears, why then it was the heart that was breaking. So her businesslikeness was a trick of the wrist: from tinkering at her face, the wiping away of a tear was perforce very deftly done, with an expertness that had a callous look. Realizing this, she made a desperate and clumsy sweep of the handkerchief and a parting jab at her eye and, throwing her head up, smiled in a strained way; and he [Victor] smiled in a strained way back.[74]

There is something almost unbearably painful in the paradoxical clarity and intuitiveness of Margot's world view. She is acutely aware of the tragic irony of what seems to be the rigged game of life. In her situation, even reaching out for the joy of love seems to be tempting a cruel fate, which will take its revenge on the lover for daring to love:

> She had been crying, muffling the bitter spasms lest she should waken Victor. She had been saying to herself that love was in vain, that love could do nothing, that the gods had a hatred for love; that love, in short, was unlucky! What could love do against events? She felt herself a frail contraption, to stand up to time and what each day brought forth and had in store! She was of no use at all, to anybody whatever -- without money as she was, without talents, or anything worth having -- except love: which made everything worse, not better. Far worse -- if you looked at it in cold blood. If she did not love Victor so much, then things would not have turned out so badly. All the evil and misfortune that came their way was sent there expressly by destiny, because it knew that love was there, where Victor and she were, and it wished to play upon that -- to crush out by torture -- love!
>
> If she could have hidden her love away from fate, then fate would have turned elsewhere, have been kinder to Victor! She was the cause of all the ill-luck that came his way. It was because she was there that no pleasant thing ever happened. It was the revenge for love! This, on the part of fate, was the revenge for love. There was no way out, unless she could kill love. And to do that she must first kill herself. But even then love would not die! Once to have been loved as she did Victor was enough -- it was compromising to the nth degree. He was a marked man! Even if he did not return it, fate would never forget. Victor would always be, whatever happened to her, the man who had been loved, in the way she had done (it was the way that she had loved [sic] was at the bottom of the matter). She knew! But there was no help for it.[75]

In this passage, Lewis makes clear not only the rationale for the title of the book, but also the frightening extent to which poverty and privation can distort a person's sense of self, and of reality.[76] The revelation of such distortion is a major theme in The Revenge for Love.

Margot and Victor are poor people -- love is in fact all that they have. Because of her working-class origins, Margot is an outsider in her own society.[77] The very alienation of her position is a key to the clarity of her understanding of the psycho-social implications of the games played by the pseudo-Marxist-revolutionary group, on the outskirts of which she and Victor hover, because of Victor's contacts as a painter, and because of their financial straits.

Of Margot's response to this group, Lewis tells us:

> The intense uneasiness that all these people aroused in her was as it were perfectly expressed by the sort of place in which they were at present congregated. As she listened to their voices -- big, baying, upper-class voices, with top-dog notes, both high and low -- shouting out boldly in haughty privileged tones what they thought, as only the Freeman is allowed to -- the subject of their discourse invariably the commonplaces of open conspiracy and unabashed sedition -- coups d'etat and gun-powder plots -- she felt a sinking of the heart. It seemed to spell, for her private existence, that of Victor and her, nothing but a sort of lunatic menace, of arrogant futility. They were not so much 'human persons,' as she described it to herself, as big portentous wax-dolls, mysteriously doped with some impenetrable nonsense, out of a Caligari's drug-cabinet, and wound up with wicked fingers to jerk about in a threatening way -- their mouths backfiring every other second, to spit out a manufactured hatred, as their eyeballs moved.
>
> Her mind strained, in an inward tension, to seize exactly what it all might mean, or might portend. But it was no use at all. It all seemed to register nothing -- or just nonsense. They recited to each other, with the foolish conceit of children, lessons out of textbooks -- out of textbooks concocted for them by professors with thick tongues in their treacherous cheeks, with a homicidal pedantry, in the jargon of a false science -- such as might have been established by a defrocked priest of International Finance, for the amusement of an insane orphanage.
>
> She could not reach out, to express her misgivings, into the difficult realms of speech, where all these disparities of thinking and acting would fall into place and be plausibly explained: but she was conscious nevertheless of a prodigious non-sequitur, at the centre of everything that she saw going on around her -- of an immense false-bottom underlying every seemingly solid surface, upon which it was her lot to tread.[78]

This passage reveals the intuitive accuracy of Margot's perception of human behaviour, both political and social. Furthermore, it expresses one of the key themes of the novel -- the ironic discrepancy between expectation, appearance, and reality, and the human contradictions involved -- as represented in the recurring image of the "false bottom."[79] This image is associated, in the novel, with the concept of the booby-trapped universe, which posits an ironically contradictory destiny for the helpless of humanity, such as Margot and Victor.

Despite the frustration of her life, Margot's love for Victor is a less self-destructive emotion than that of the suicidal Hester, of Self Condemned, perhaps because the object of her love is shown as worthy of her devotion. Lewis shows that, unlike René of Self Condemned,[80] Victor has not allowed himself to atrophy emotionally, or to stifle the more tender side of his nature. Lewis portrays Victor as something of an adventurer, idealistically involved[81] with Margot. Nevertheless, Victor is able to respond to Margot's love with all the passion and gentleness that are native to the natural bases of his own psycho-cultural roots:

> Margot was his mate, Margot was his love, who had never reproached him -- who was as gentle as a young wallaby, who reminded him always of that lovely and strange-plumaged bird that had floated down into the water, covered by his gun, but he could not fire on it because it seemed too mild a thing to bludgeon with a bullet -- just where the Gentle Annie Creek runs into the Sandy Elvira. (And a great current of homesickness besieged him, like a storm of scent in the centre of a frigid breeze, as he remembered his days upon that tropical stream.)[82]

Clearly, Victor shares the passionate loyalty and the emotional responsibility that mark Margot's devotion to himself. To this loyalty is added the extra dimension of his own masculine protectiveness and idealistic friendship, intermingled as these are with a ruefully realistic -- even pessimistic -- world view:

> Not to let down another creature, who had brought her life over and cast in her lot with yours, what sort of a fool's dream was that? But maybe it was a question of good luck, if nothing more: just as you would not willingly betray the trustfulness of a bird that makes its nest against your window. A rugged unrevolutionary principle, founded upon sentiment, not intellect. But Victor Stamp was prone to accept it, because of the simple life that was his natal background. It was the pact of nature; but with the human factor it became more. Was it not the poetry of the social compact too? Here was one of the elemental things in life. Why, it was the psychological analogue of the 'great open spaces' upon the geographical plane. He reflected that he was poor Margaret's universe. What he did not give her she would not get. No! He must not stop in this inert condition,

but begin furiously moving round upon his axis -- even if only in the void and in a blind spin, and to no useful purpose (though this hateful qualification was added in a sotto voce to the more energetic preamble).[83] (The italics are mine.)

Indeed, her love for Victor (and his for her) are all that Margot has. Hence, this love has to be her source of liberation, her education, her identity. Where her more privileged sisters have other sources of liberation or self-development open to them,[84] all Margot has is her love. Hence, this must be her source of liberation, and of growth. If she is to survive, on the emotional and psychic levels, it is this love which must provide her with a base for development. Whether or not this development actually is seen to occur, is a key question in our assessment of this novel.

The "Hermit Girl" and her "Reckless Apollo"

Margot starts out as the self-effacing lover of Victor Stamp -- the "hermit girl,"[85] who sacrifices willingly her life, her love, and whatever little money she has, in the support and nurturing of Victor and his dream of being an artist. Lewis ironically portrays Margot in the role of subservient, fragile female, in his early descriptions of their embrace:

> Victor rolled round in one movement, banging upon the box-springs with his revolving body; and flinging his arm out, behind Margot's shoulder, drew her down so that her face got hidden at once under his granite chin, and the he-man hollows of his collarbone, as she fitted herself in beneath the pressure of his arms. He did not say anything at all as he did this, and they lay there without moving, Victor glaring up at the plaster scrolls of the ceiling, like a picture of an Orang defending its young, his eyes full of the light of battle.
>
> After a while she stealthily lifted her head, uncertain as to what was going on. She stamped a series of impulsive little kisses upon his chin and cheek. Then his arms parted -- there was a vacuum,

> a chasm, where there had before been a plenum: and the small girl stiffly stepped out of bed backwards, as debutantes withdraw from the presence of their sovereign.[86]

Interestingly, Lewis shows that, in their intimate moments, Victor also shares the nurturing role (as manifest in the comparison with the protective animal), which has been associated with Margot. Here, also, the protective male/fragile female polarization is evident. As the novel develops, this polarization disappears, and is replaced instead, by the passionate friendship which grows between the lovers, as Margot herself grows into a more assertive person.

Lewis's articulation of Margot's inchoate thoughts is a continuing structural device in the novel. It is used for purposes of clarification, and character analysis. Through this technique, Lewis externalizes Margot's deep emotional commitment to the relationship with Victor, and her intuitive recognition of the dangers which Victor risks as a result of his naively casual approach to life and politics. Margot also sees that these risks are the result of his own internalization of the masculine stereotype of the strong silent man, or of the man-of-action myth.[87] Similarly, Lewis reveals Margot's perceptive and imaginative understanding of how her lover sees himself, in her whimsical conceptualization of the myth of "these handsome men," these "reckless Apollos."[88] This somewhat indulgent concept embodies her loving, but clear-sighted comprehension of how Victor's easy physicality leads him to accept the most facile, simplistic psycho-social view, and therefore find accompanying psychological ease, even at the risk of real dangers to himself. This dangerous habit is exemplified in Victor's ill-advised involvement and trust in the illegal gun-running plot with Abershaw and O'Hara, who eventually double-cross and merely use him as a decoy -- a circumstance which indirectly leads to the death of both Margot and himself.

However, Lewis shows that the indulgent tone of Margot's awareness of her lover's short-comings in no way lessens the clarity of her understanding of the limits which this man's physical beauty and related physicality have placed on the development of his worldly perceptions. Here is a loving, but nonetheless cool appraisal of her love-object, by the erstwhile blind adorer:

> She looked up at his face. She saw nothing but easy confidence in his handsome face. To be so handsome as Victor, she reflected, was to have that sort of easy confidence. These proud Apollos had it to a man. Handsome men had to be put on their guard! They took risks that plain men would never run! They were really unteachable fellows! Oh, this unfortunate optimism of good looks -- as if good looks could do anything against circumstances! She hated to have to bring Victor down to earth. Such a dangerous earth, no respecter of handsome persons. But it must be done.[89]

False Bottoms

Lewis indicates that Margot is aware, from the very start, of the dangers implicit in Victor's unwise association with the O'Hara/Abershaw outfit. Her intuitive unease at the party is matched by her instinctively suspicious reaction to an apparently trivial incident. She discovers the scheming pair (Abershaw and O'Hara) practicing the forgery of Victor's signature.[90] This incident is part of the preparation of their elaborate scheme for using Victor as an unwitting decoy in their Spanish gun-running plot. Although Margot is unaware of the full implications of the incident, unlike her easy-going lover, she is grounded in reality, and senses the viciousness[91] latent in the activities of these fashionable pseudo-radicals, understanding that, indeed, "It isn't only about money that people can use a signature."[92]

Lewis expresses Margot's astute awareness of the potential dangers in Victor's association with Abershaw and O'Hara through the repeated use of the image of false bottoms. This image is a key metaphor in the structure of the novel, comparable to the use of the mask metaphor which recurs in The Vulgar Streak.[93] And, just as the mask metaphor provides thematic unity and a dramatic core in The Vulgar Streak, the false bottom image embodies a central concept which Lewis uses to express, in this novel, Margot's growing awareness of the duplicity of her fellow human-beings, and the threatening ambivalence of existence. This awareness is represented, on one level only, by Margot's increasing perception of the perfidiousness of the fashionable radicals, and their illicit schemes.[94] In its fullest sense, this awareness is one which informs the overall thought of the novel, raising the disturbing question of the possibility of a booby-trapped (of false-bottomed) universe.

It should be noted that, in this novel, the mask metaphor is also used -- as a secondary device for expressing the key themes of deceit and fraudulence throughout the novel. It is used most effectively in Lewis's description of the confidence-man, Abershaw.[95] The use of this metaphor establishes further structural and thematic similarities between The Revenge for Love and The Vulgar Streak.[96] However, in the former novel, the mask image is always secondary to the image of false bottoms, which is the primary image in this novel, in terms of structure and theme. Lewis utilizes this image in dramatically decisive moments in the novel -- as he does when he describes the final, painfully ironic moment, when Margot and Victor realize that they have been used as decoys by Abershaw and O'Hara, who have given them a car full of bricks, not guns, to smuggle into Spain, at the risk (and ultimate cost), of their lives. The final expression of Margot's consciousness with which Lewis closes his description of the lives of these lovers, is a hysterically agonized awareness of the tragic-comic nature of a booby-trapped universe:

> But Margot still contemplated the patent car, built for the pawky racketeers. She grinned stupidly at this murderous dove-grey body, all opened up, like the carcass of a captured shark, and now utterly shown up. Even for Victor it was quite discredited. And at last she laughed outright at the absurdity of it. She laughed loudly and without restraint. A false bottom -- a false bottom on wheels; but all full of nothing at all, except packing-paper and bricks! She went on laughing. The joke grew on her, the more she thought about it. She went on laughing more and more.[97] (The italics are mine.)

Margot and the Dwarf

While Margot and Victor are in Spain, involved in the gun-running scheme of Abershaw and O'Hara, Margot becomes the object of the attentions of a maliciously intelligent dwarf, the village entertainer or mascot, as she and Victor sit in a village restaurant. The incident with the dwarf is part of a painful middle passage for Margot, when she is torn between the roles of passive lover of Victor, and active advisor to him. At the time of this incident, she is still hysterically passive, her psyche worked upon by a myriad external and inner forces and stresses, many of which are related to their present trip to Spain, and her misgivings about it. Because of her distressed state of mind, she falls easy prey to the dwarf's sadistically vociferous attentions:

> If Margot's spine had been the string of a violin, and had this howl of his been its vibration, she could not have suffered more. But it was not only the sound. There was something. She had a motive for more legitimate dismay. For the fearful little creature was addressing its mock complaints _to her_. He had picked on her to be his dramatic mother.[98]

The dwarf incident, and the conscious sadism of his attentions to the distraught Margot, can be seen as a caricature, or as a distorted paradigm for the pregnancy that Margot never has. This incident also embodies a distortion of the ambivalent relationship between a distressed mother and a difficult infant. Lewis uses the dwarf as the dramatic symbol of Margot's and Victor's stunted future; just as a child would have been the symbol of the lovers' shared future, this ill-formed being represents to Margot's disturbed consciousness, the intuitive and hallucinatory symbol of the distorted and stunted future of their life together. This future is seen as stunted or distorted because of their poverty, and their present involvement in what Margot knows is an unwise and dangerous mission. The dwarf can also be seen as an icon representing the perversion of society's denial, to Margot and Victor, of even the possibility of a right to have a happy and full life together. Therefore, Margot's intuitive sense of the ambiguous nature of the dwarf and his attentions, combining with her anxious premonition of the imminent disaster awaiting herself and Victor, leaves her completely vulnerable to the dwarf's harrassments.

Lewis also shows the dwarf's role as an ambiguous social phenomenon, neither man nor child, but a kind of child-man. Lewis isolates the psycho-social contradictions which are enacted in his shrill performance, in this passage:

> With his spoilt-child status, enjoyed among the Spaniards by all dwarfs and midgest -- but more especially achondro-plastic monsters of his sort -- it was permissible for him to do this. The really true-blue stump-of-a-man, in full and flourishing health, suffering only from swelled head, in every sense of the word -- with a swagger as if they owned the entire earth -- that sort of citizen has the freedom of Spain. But how could Margot have guessed this? These prescriptive codes are closed books, till they are found out, to the members of other nations. She was a mere excursionist. Yet by this oddly backward public accepted as a mysterious charge, her persecutor was quite within his rights. He could impress Margot or anybody into his preposterous exhibition; none could object. Whatever his age, his status was that of a tiny tot: he was in the nature of a public orphan, that was it. So as a certified desgraciado he was free to insult or to hector, having paid the price of extreme deformity -- it was his quid pro quo.[99]

Additionally, Lewis indicates that Margot's response to the dwarf's performance is intensified by a painful awareness of the larger personal implications of the little drama.[100] This response incorporates the recognition of the frighteningly absolute nature of her commitment to Victor: in short, she realizes that, had the dwarf been Victor's child, she would have accepted and loved it, despite its deformity. Margot is shocked by this realization of the full extent of her devotion to Victor, and she projects into her response to the dwarf's real deformity all the self-rejection which results from her history of deprivation. Thus, Lewis recounts:

> This clamour of misfortune (at the source of which she must not even look -- which made it more difficult by far, since then it was just the sound which assailed her, and it was a magnified replica of life), this insane uproar had administered a crazy stimulus to her uncertain nerves. To her horror, she found herself responding! Margot even -- out of sheer aversion, out of mechanical sympathy, or because of both together -- felt that she was actually holding this

> implacable infant in her arms. She was attempting to subdue its cries. And she could not master this horrible hallucination, try as she would.
>
> Fancy if she had a baby of that sort -- one which bellowed incessantly -- one which had Victor's eyes -- one which she loved -- one which she adored! Out of their misery -- should they give birth to something -- might it not turn out to be some crooked monstrosity? Its hideous outcry would snap her heart-strings. Would she love it? Yes, she could answer for that all right. She knew she would love it; just as she had not revolted from the spectacle of their ill-begotten distress. She had not shrunk from the squalor of their circumstances -- the fireless room, even some days no food but tea -- after all the effort she earlier had expended to escape from squalor. She would love the crooked offspring more because it was obscenely ugly. It would indeed have to be only half-human to be true. That would be the way that it please her best![10]

The hysterical distortion of Margot's reaction to the dwarf's performance and his effort to interact with her can be seen as the measure of the oppressed state of her psyche. This aggravated condition is, in turn, a response to her sense of the futility of their poverty-stricken lives, the dangers which she fears (correctly) in their Spanish expedition, and her own inability to convince Victor of these. As such, the dwarf incident is important on a symbolic level. It reveals the dislocating and oppressive social and economic forces which have curtailed the dreams of Margot and Victor, as well as the human greed and malevolence which will eventually assist in the gratuitous curtailment of their very lives.

Male Supportiveness

Victor is unable to understand fully the complex psychological nature of Margot's distress. Lewis shows, however, that this failure does not result from any lack of caring, but rather is the result of a failure of imagination. Because he is confused by Margot's anguish, which must obviously be the result of disturbing emotional factors, somehow mobilized by the dwarf's performance, Victor resorts to a stereotyped male response:

> Victor Stamp looked at her out of a lazily narrowed eye, in almost as much alarm as the others, although his concern was masked in the manly reserve of the stockman, coupled with the furtive impassability of the swagman.
>
> He perceived that her grimace was deeply grafted, and directed outward at nothing in particular -- or at the nothingness which is all that is there, unless you conjure things up for yourself, and furnish this white screen with your private pictures. His poor angel-bird, with all her hieratic Persian feathers, her stiff and cautious repertory of response, had been shot down by the shaft that flies by night, from the fingers of the dark Bowman! She had passed out, poor darling, and just pushed down -- or had had pushed down for her -- her rational self, and allowed this evil madonna to come up grinning to the surface of things, where we are all on our best behaviour, and go about to smile and to be polite. His poor Margot had gone to pieces at his side, without his guessing what was in progress. As he had sat sketching the dwarf something sinister had happened to his darling companion.[102]

However, Lewis makes it clear that, though Victor may not understand the exact nature of the psychic trauma which Margot is experiencing, he is both sensitive and loving enough to offer the solace of human warmth and tenderness, rather than to reject her in irritation, or embarrassment. Lewis shows this in an intensely touching passage, describing their departure from the restaurant, and the scene that ensues, in which Victor succeeds in reaching Margot's consciousness, and pulling her out of the traumatic crisis of her psychic agony. To do this, he uses no more sophisticated method of psycho-therapy than tenderness:

> To a rolling and nodding of heads, to a muffled muttering of dozens of tongues, he led his angel-bird away, directing her like a tractable automaton along the top of the Plaza and into a hilly street of little shops.
>
> As they walked on, in a sort of goose-step time, as if her limbs, like her features, had been inflexible at first, she continued

> to peer forward and to enjoy the joke. He supported her with his hand beneath her arm. They had not gone far when tears started to slide down her cheeks, out of her staring eyes. With that the lips relaxed, and the bitter grinning mask showed signs of breaking up. Then her lips commenced to tremble and to work painfully, as though she were attempting to speak. Finally a savage wail broke from them, and the joke was at an end.
>
> Flinging herself against a great panelled door, like something out of a Hollywood set, which offered itself, she pressed her streaming face into the pillow of her lifted arm. She was convulsed from head to foot. Great cries came from her. Settling in against a sculpted jamb, Victor drew her round, and supported her head against the big twin-pillow of his chest. There he gripped the agitated body of her skull, stroking the wings of her soft hair, as he might have secured a wild bird that had come to some harm, and have attempted to reassure it. Her head was no bigger than the body of a sea-gull, she was extraordinarily small and light.
>
> Then he began to whisper to her in the tone employed by men to a frightened horse, in a very low and penetrating voice, to show that they are speaking only for its ear, in private messages. 'Honey-angel!' was the most frequent name he used. And 'honey-angel' was the name this sub-self answered to.
>
> As he called softly and coaxingly to the irrational soul that had usurped, in broad daylight, the personality of the 'hermit-girl,' he stared away from her with a straining and abstracted eye, in a listening attitude. He was waiting to get a message up from the submerged tenth of Margot Stamp, which was now in action, to the exclusion of the rest of her. And at last sure enough came a hoarse whisper, and he looked down at the top of her head.[103] (The italics are mine.)

Indeed, Lewis indicates that, though Victor may lack the imagination or the intuition to interpret Margot's crisis correctly, he does not in any way lack tenderness or love in his response to her. Certainly, though his interpretation of her pain may be limited by stereotypical thinking,[104] and though he may lack the intellectual or imaginative insight to understand her agony clearly, he can certainly empathize with her, and offer his fullest, and fully stabilizing, support when it is most urgently needed.

Through this incident, Lewis seems to indicate that, even when psycho-social conditioning may inhibit full understanding between a man and a woman, or between two persons, it is finally faith as a friend and the will to empathize which liberate their relationship on the humanistic level. This liberation is real love. Hence, the following description sums up the nature of their differences, but also of their acceptance of, and commitment to each other's humanity -- in short, their love for each other.

> They stood in the roadway gazing at one another. Last seen, this papier-mache figure -- a whitish flutter of cotton, a palish, expressionless, wedge of face, a pair of nervous hands -- his immaterial wife -- was pursuing its way, book in hand, along a French road. Now it had turned up, coming out of a grove of nut trees, only a few hours later, in the middle of a Spanish province.
>
> How had Margot reached this spot -- up out of the earth, or down out of the air? The question rolled languidly in his mind as he watched her: he paid no attention to it, he just allowed it impersonally to roll to and fro, as idle questions will. On her side, her manner suggested no consciousness at all of the uncanny velocity these displacements of hers implied. But they just calmly looked at each other: there was no disposition on his part indiscreetly to inquire what had brought her here, or how. That was her business. The why and the wherefore of his being where he was, that likewise was his business. His being a world of black and white, composed of clear-cut individuals, it followed that each and all had his own business to attend to, not secretively but as an unchallengeable free-agent, and owing no account of himself to any man. And she saw freedom in that way, too.
>
> The big, lean Australian head, as if chopped out of brown indiarubber, showed up well in the Spanish sun. The long, mascular pits of its temples equably displayed their ascetic lines. The tanned face did not carry about its tan, as it did in London, as if it were a tiresome advertisement to emigrate and play at the pioneer. Victor was at home here, in a sense. But the small figure in front of him, that was at home nowhere. Yet it did not seem to mind. It looked as if it regarded it as quite as natural to be there as anywhere else. It belonged to Victor, who was its sun and its meridian. At the Pole she would be at home with Victor, as much as it was possible to be that upon this earth.[105]

This, then, is Lewis's ultimate portrayal of love -- not a homogenized effortlessness or a great passion, but rather the dynamically liberating power of mutual loyalty, respect, acceptance, and commitment to another's humanity.

Love and Liberation

However, Lewis also implies that, before Margot could experience positively[106] the fullness of her commitment to loving Victor, it was necessary for her to free herself from the bonds of her own psychocultural conditioning. Thus, her eventual rejection of the traditional male/female images and definitions offered in the only literature she knows marks her change from fearful, hysterical passivity to responsible, assertive activity.[107]

After the incident with the dwarf, Margot has parted temporarily from Victor, who has gone off on his Spanish gun-running errand, breezily certain that the Spanish authorities are unaware of the real reason for his presence as a "tourist" in Spain. (Of course, Victor is wrong; the Spanish authorities are watching him -- as is part of O'Hara's plan for the use of Victor as a convenient and unwitting decoy.)[108] Margot, meanwhile, is sitting alone, contemplating nature, and some literary essays.[109] Her response to the sexual stereotypes expressed in one of these essays is an interesting exposure of the process of inner change through which she is going:

> 'I would take Chaucer, and show you why he wrote a Legend of Good Women; but no Legend of Good Men.' All Spenser's fairy knights were faulty: only his women were perfect and unassailable. All Shakespeare's men were ghastly failures: only his women were admirable and without fault. 'Shakespeare has no heroes: he has only heroines. There is not one entirely heroic figure in all his plays . . . . In his laboured and perfect plays you have no hero . . . Whereas there is hardly a play that has not a perfect woman in it.'
>
> For some reason, Margot was unable to say why, these observations depressed her. This sweeping belittlement of the male she had never even noticed before, in the course of her dreamy reading of this particular chapter. She had only had eyes for the chivalrous flattery of women, who were described throughout as 'queens.' And of course this account of things excluded Victor.

> She smiled with a wistful melancholy at all the handsome things that this too emotional master out of the old days had found to say about her sex: *as she reflected how much stimulation she must have required to overcome her inferiority complex* (horrid expression!). *She had overcome it almost at the expense of Victor; for Victor was a man*, and Ruskin would have it that no great writer who had ever lived had shown a man as a hero. 'Are all these great men mistaken, or are we?' she read, with dubious eyes. 'Are Shakespeare and Aeschylus, Dante and Homer merely dressing dolls for us?'
>
> And her small voice asked, inside her head, 'Were they?' and she wondered! Was *she* a doll? If she had been in the book of a great man would she have been a doll, 'dressed' by him out of contempt for all that she was, or could ever be? And why were these great men such pessimists (*if the great Ruskin was right about them*), and why did they find it impossible to portray a man as a 'hero'? Were *she* one of these authors she would have no difficulty about the hero side of the business, she was sure of that. *She* would not fill her book with 'queens!' But she was afraid that her heroes would all have a certain family likeness! She smiled to herself at the thought of the different versions of Victor which would flower beneath her pen.[110] (The italics are mine.)

Despite her gentle self-irony, Margot is able to question the traditional sexual stereotypes which the essay projects. Her criticisms reveal her astute humanism, and her basic *liking and respect* for men, as well as her resistance to sexual stereotypes, however flattering these may be to her own sex.[111] It is clear, also, that these qualities are linked to her love for Victor. As such, this love enables her to see the flaws in traditional socio-cultural sexual stereotypes and roles, which limit males just as they do females,[112] as she is instinctively aware. Hence, Lewis is demonstrating that, as in Margot's case, love for another can liberate a person from the prison of the sexist stereotype -- whether this be an anti-female or an anti-male stereotype. The result of this liberation is a widening, a universalizing, and a further humanizing of her vision of reality -- of which an acceptable and lovable part is male. Furthermore, Margot sees through and rejects the chivalrous female stereotype projected in the essay, understanding that its regal euphemisms are merely condescending disguises for traditional female "doll" roles, rather than indications of a more meaningful re-interpretation of human existence, or of relationships between the sexes. At this point, the autonomous process of Margot's liberation from the traditional psycho-sexual categories is complete -- she is now "in the camp of the defeated Victors,"[113] *not only because of her love for a man, but also because she cannot accept a stereotypical definition of her sex and of herself, notwithstanding the euphemisms in which these may be couched*.

Skilfully, Lewis shows that Margot gains even more from the essay than her recognition of the weakness of the sexual stereotypes it presents. The writer's condemnation of Ophelia as a weak Shakespearean female figure catalyzes further soul-searching and recognitions:

> But there was one passage upon which she fastened with a brooding dismay. For here was a different sort of woman -- Ophelia: one singled out to be an example of all that a woman ought not to be. Of this she took far more notice than of all the rest. It was, as it were, the parting gift of her discarded master; as if he had said: 'You do not any longer believe in my "Queens"? Very well. Here is something for you to put in their place, to remember me by.' For herself, she never felt anything but a very *weak* woman; she had supposed that weakness was of the essence of the thing. Yet -- 'Among all the principal figures in Shakespeare's plays there is only one weak woman -- Ophelia; and it is because she fails Hamlet at the critical moment, and is not, and cannot in her nature be, a guide to him when he needs her most, that all the bitter catastrophe follows.' And then, after the *weak* woman -- the one weak woman -- follow the evil women. But of those Margot took little account. She took no interest in evil women.
>
> If she was not in the mood to swallow the 'queen,' and if she had turned wearily from this 'garden,' she was only too ready to examine that unworthy exception to the queenly rule. *The incompetent mate!* That was what was being held up to her scorn. This type of all weakness began to impose itself upon her with as much force as had formerly the figure of the 'queen.'[114]

At this point, by identifying with the negative criticisms of Ophelia, Margot finally frees herself from ultrafeminine passivity and obsessiveness, and she is catapulted into action by a new sense of the responsibility that loving entails, regardless of the sexual status of the lover. Lewis describes this moment of truth as follows:

> Closing the book abruptly, even a little brutally, she threw up her head and stared past, or quite through, the present scene. She discerned the figures of herself and Victor stopped at the frontier by the military police, as if in a diorama: their two passports were changing hands. She ought not to have allowed Victor to undertake that excursion: she scolded herself. She had been criminally weak. Indeed, they ought not to be here in France at all; and that was that. What was she doing lying by the side of this pretty stream, too, while Rome was burning? What sort of figure would she cut in Chaucer, or in Homer? She asked with a half-hearted, one-sided smile. Was this a moment to be flirting with 'nature' -- with a guide-book to its charms, to make it worse, and more ridiculous?[115]

Margot has suddenly understood the full meaning of responsibility in love, and of the strength she must exercise in protecting her loved one from a threatening world, and, indeed, from himself. This new insight is one that will enable her to assert herself in ways hitherto impossible, and to be, to the man she loves, *transcendentally and androgynously,*[116] *less of a woman, and more of a friend*.

Lewis later summarizes the change in Margot as follows:

> And the hermit-girl had changed her tactics. *She had become an amazon, beside her mountain stream*! She would shout warnings in Victor's ear. She marched almost, she well-nigh goose-stepped, up the village street, with a quasi-obstreperous eye. It darted upon the bulging back of Percy Hardcaster -- his face, as ever, towards Spain -- as if it meant business. *Ruskin had armed it with Victorian pugnacity and will-to-live, even in the moment when she had cast him out for ever as a queen-maker*.[117] (The italics are mine.)

Indeed, Margot no longer needs the paternalistic compensation of seeing the female role as that of a queen. Instead, imbued with the strength that comes with a positive self-concept, she has finally taken her rightful position as Victor's adviser, his equal, his friend.

From this point onwards, Margot's and Victor's shared destiny, and ultimately their shared death, are, seemingly, the natural correlatives of their shared commitment. Yet, despite -- or, perhaps, because of, the tragic and gratuitous death which they share, the action of this novel has a transcendent meaning. Lewis has shown that a woman's love for a man can provide her with a base for development and emotional growth, which goes beyond all the limits of psychosexual conditioning. He has also shown, through his portrait of Margot, that inner strength and psychic growth can energize a person, in turn, to develop love into a form of new vision and maturity.

Conclusion

In a real sense, The Revenge for Love is a novel about love, and the ostensible futility of love in a world where only those who "hustle," can play and win the game of life. As his choice of title implies, Lewis shows love as an act of defiance against destiny, an act of veritable audaciousness in a universe which is booby-trapped, or in a life which is mined with "false-bottoms."

The affirmation of Margot's and Victor's love for each other is the only positive element in their deprived existence, and the only source of truth in a social microcosm where lies, fraudulence, and exploitation are the easiest means of self-justification, and to social and economic security. Theirs is a relationship which does not find room for the arrogant carnality of a Gillian Phipps, the self-delusion of a Percy Hardcaster, or the avarice of a Sean O'Hara. Horrifyingly, Margot and Victor (and the reader also), find that the Lewisian universe *is* booby-trapped, with the "false-bottoms" manufactured by man in his crass search for power and gain. Lewis shows that, in a society dominated by such individuals as Gillian Phipps, O'Hara, Abershaw, and Jack Cruze, there is no respect for the selfless, tender emotion which unites Margot and Victor. Lewis also shows, ironically, that such a love is a challenge to society and the human universe as they now stand; for this challenge, the lovers must be punished with a gratuitously meaningless death -- the ultimate revenge for their temerity in choosing to love.

[64] Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 171, 230, and 352.

[65] Ibid., 230-231.

[66] Ibid., 78.

[67] Ibid., 67.

[68] See Section III, of Chapter II of this thesis.

[69] The Revenge for Love, 171, and 159-160.

[70] Cf. Chapter I, Part A, 9-14, of Anne Blott's (nee Wilson) M.A. thesis, written for the Department of English, University of Alberta.

[71] The Revenge for Love, 66-67.

[72] Ibid., 170.

[73] Ibid., 179.

[74] Ibid., 75.

[75] Ibid., 66. Cf. Mateu's comments on Margot's love for Victor, 339.

[76] Cf. the analyses of the portraits of Vincent and Maddie, of The Vulgar Streak, in Sections II and III, of Chapter II of this thesis.

[77] The Revenge for Love, 171.

[78] Ibid., 161-162.

[79] See also Ibid., 253, 272, and 371. (The use of this image is discussed later in this Chapter.)

[80] Cf. Lewis, Self Condemned, 140-141.

[81] Cf. The remarks made about the different levels of men's involvement with women, in the introduction to Chapter III of this thesis.

[82] The Revenge for Love, 76-77. (Note the recurrence of the bird image, here again used as an evocation of love, spontaneous caring and tenderness.)

[83] Ibid., 77-78.

[84] Cf. Mary of The Red Priest. (See Sections III and IV of Chapter IV of this thesis.)

[85] The Revenge for Love, 230.

[86] Ibid., 67-68.

[87] See Ibid., 350, and Lewis, Time and Western Man, 20-21, respectively.

[88] The Revenge for Love, 302.

[89] Ibid., 290, and 324.

[90] Ibid., 162.

[91] Ibid., Cf. Ibid., 172, 175-176, and 177-178.

[92] Ibid., 174.

[93] Lewis, The Vulgar Streak, 167, 168 and 224.

[94] The Revenge for Love, 161-162, and 177-178.

[95] Ibid., 176-176.

[96] Cf. The Revenge for Love, 299, and The Vulgar Streak, 167, 168 and 224, for use of similar images.

[97] The Revenge for Love, 371. Compare Lewis's analysis of laughter as a highly dynamic form and expression of, vision and understanding, in "The Meaning of the Wild Body" in The Wild Body collection, 245.

[98] The Revenge for Love, 292.

[99] Ibid., 292.

[100] Ibid., 294.

[101] Ibid., 295-296.

[102] Ibid., 297-298. (Note the use of both the bird and mask images, in this dramatically crucial passage.)

[103] Ibid., 298-299.

[104] Ibid., 299-230.

[105] Ibid., 345.

[106] Cf. Margot's earlier rejection of her love for Victor as a source of troubles, for which fate would take revenge on them both. (Ibid., 66.)

[107] Compare Margot's full undertaking of the emotional responsibilities entailed in her love for Victor as manifest in her decision to accompany him on his dangerous Spanish mission (Text, 309) and her assertively critical confrontation with the patronizing Percy Hardcaster, in Victor's presence, 324-329.

[108] Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 301-303.

[109] See J. Carter and G. Pollard, Op. Cit.

[110] The Revenge for Love, 306-307.

[111] This attitude contrasts with what we have labelled "female chauvinism," in Chapter IV of this thesis.

[112] See Bednarik, et al., Op. Cit., in this regard.

[113] The Revenge for Love, 308.

[114] Ibid., 308-309.

[115] Ibid., 309.

[116] On the concept of androgyny, see S. De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 682-689.

[117] Lewis, The Revenge for Love, 312.

CONCLUSION

One of the major achievements of Lewis's work is his exploration and explosion of stereotypes -- human, sexual, psychological, social and political. Therefore, I do not intend to conclude this study with any effort to myself stereotype Lewis's work with slick labels. Suffice it to say that, by exploding so many of the stereotypes which society uses both to defend itself and to confuse, Lewis's work can liberate the reader's awareness and sensibility in a unique way. However, there are some for whom Lewis's suggestions and explorations, and the images in which they are embodied, are psychologically menacing. There are some who need the comforting simplifications of stereotypical or crowd thought. Lewis's work is not for these people. But for those whom it does not frighten, Lewis's work can represent a mirror, an interpretation, and, eventually, an understanding of human existence -- both male and female -- which is timeless in its starkness, its truth and its serenity.

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